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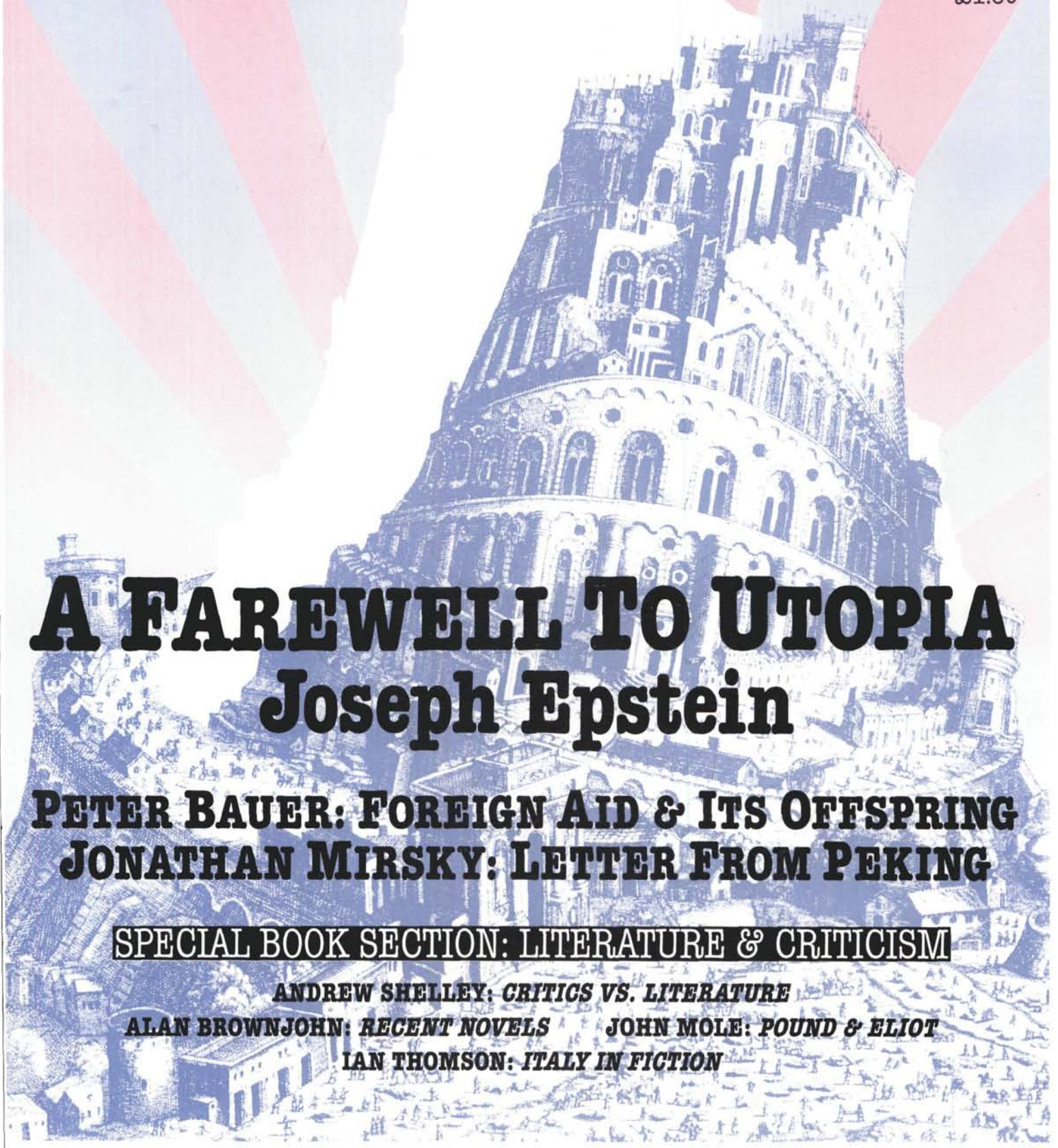

A FAREWELL TO UTOPIA
Joseph Epstein

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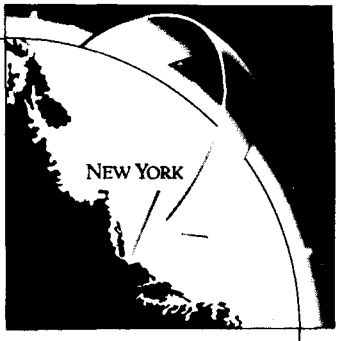

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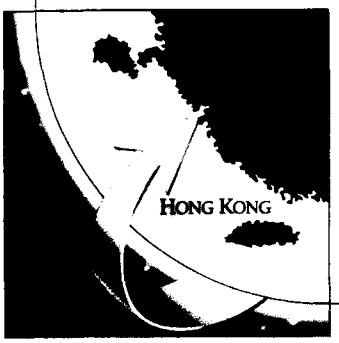

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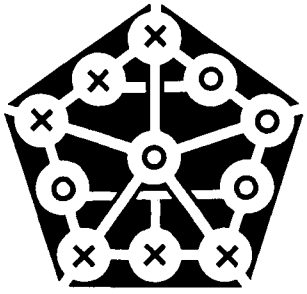
Joseph Epstein

A Farewell to Utopia

On the Tyranny of Virtue

"Well, I hope you think a little better of the world. We mustn't make up our minds too early in life."

Henry James, THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA



FAMOUS AMERICAN corners. Permit me to name a few: Hollywood & Vine, State & Madison, Broadway & 42nd Street, Haight & Ashbury. Shortly before beginning this essay, I happened to be in San Francisco, staying with someone who lives in the Haight-Ashbury district, and over a three-day visit walked past the corner of Haight and Ashbury and along the street and in the neighbourhood known as "the Haight" perhaps twenty times. I never did so without a rich stew of emotion boiling within me. If San Francisco was the spiritual capital of that period in recent history we think of with chronological inexactitude as "the Sixties", then nearby Berkeley was its Finland Station and Haight-Ashbury its Red Square. To alter my trope rather abruptly, if the '60s were your idea of a good time, the Haight was Ciro's, the Chez Paris, the Copa Cabana; it was where, baby, the good times rolled.

Although some small changes have been made on the Haight—a few new shops have gone in, a few head shops have gone out—and although rising real-estate prices presage other changes in the near future, I found myself surprised how little the street seemed to change, how very "'60s" it all still appeared—at least outwardly. Block after block of shops sell hand-crafted jewellery, homosexual and feminist books (The Anarchist Collective Bookstore), used clothing, berets, (putative) health food, aggressively uninteresting paintings—in short, as Zorba the Greek might say, the full catastrophe. The street's denizens are got up in full '60s regalia: beards, long hair, ubiquitous denim, backpacks, bedrolls, bandanas. Walking past the corner of Haight and Ashbury, I noted a man of perhaps my own middle years, red-eyed and in an advanced stage of scragglitude, who plunked his guitar and intoned, "Oh, ya drop dead in the street and they give ya a ticket for littering. . . ." A block or so farther on, I heard, behind me, one man say to another, "Whaddaya say we go up to Montana, get hold of some shit, and take it down to Mexico?"

On the Haight I felt as if I was Rip Van Winkle in reverse—as if I fell asleep and awoke to find that it was not forty years later but twenty years earlier. Except of course it wasn't, and there was ample evidence to prove that it wasn't. The young, blonde, long-haired, be-sandalled girls who seemed so much a part of the counter-culture fantasy—a pipe of pot, a book of *Howl*, and thou—are now older, grey, still long-haired and be-sandalled women, looking much the worse for wear. The man who sang about dropping dead in the street, the chances are, may do just that. While many of these ageing hippies sleep in Buena Vista Park, where they are not disturbed by San Francisco's highly tolerant police, others drop off on stoops before pastel-painted houses or in doorways. When they wake in the cool San Francisco morning, they are not a charming sight; they are, instead, a reminder of the good sense of Santayana's remark that "the state of nature presupposes a tropical climate".

As I walked along the Haight, I, who am perhaps about as square as one can get on this earth this late in the century, felt no hostility directed at me. Yet I felt a good deal of my own hostility directed toward them, these sad and ageing hippies, who seemed to be standing around awaiting a bus into the past. I felt toward them a sense of revulsion, and loathing, and above all demoralisation—the latter, especially, when I would notice a young adolescent who looked to me as if he might be a runaway come to the Haight to live the counter-cultural dream. Looking into the drug-besotted eyes of people who are now pushing middle-age, I thought: My God, the squalor, the waste, the horror! And I also felt: what good luck that the counter-cultural dream progressed no further than it did. Passing a clutch of these men and women on the very corner of Haight and Ashbury, I muttered

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *who is the Editor of "The American Scholar", is the author of "The Middle of My Tether", "Plausible Prejudices", and "Once More Around the Block". A new collection of his literary essays, "Partial Payments", will be published later this year by W. W. Norton. His earlier contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include "'Partisan Review' & the Phillips Curve" (January 1985).*

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to myself, "What you do with your own life is your own business, but I'm awfully glad that, in the battle of competing visions, yours lost."

But did it? The pathetic creatures lingering on the Haight are but the lost remnant of a now dead movement, people who bought the whole package of inchoate philosophy, quarter-baked politics, and sappy transcendentalism that made up the intellectual content of the movement. And yet in diluted form much of the spirit of the '60s lives on; and in some quarters it seems not merely living on but very nearly prevailing, even if not in the preserved-in-amber form one finds it in on the Haight. I find this spirit alive and all too well in the universities, for example. Those professors now in their forties, and hence coming into dominance as full professors, department chairmen, and deans, were all in their twenties in the late 1960s. Wherever they actually went to school, the true *alma mater* for most of them is the '60s, when they were graduate students. One sees the '60s influence not only in their dress and ubiquitous beards—theirs is surely the first generation of full professors to teach in jeans—but in their chumminess with students, their readiness to subvert tradition, their rush to align themselves with what they construe to be virtuous causes. The generation of the '60s was above all the generation of virtue. They set out to make America better. America, unfortunately, or fortunately, was not as good as they.

THE 1960s, I have come to believe, are something of a political Rorschach test. Tell me what you think of that period and I shall tell you what your politics are. Tell me that you think the period both good and bad, with much to be said for and against it, and you are, whether you know it or not, a liberal. Tell me that you think the '60s a banner time in American life, a period of unparallelled idealism, a splendid opportunity sadly missed, and you are doubtless a radical, sentimental or otherwise. Tell me that you think the '60s a time of horrendous dislocation, a disaster nearly averted, a damn near thing, but a thing none the less for which we are still paying and will continue to pay, and I shall tell you . . . well, I am not sure what you are, precisely; but your views, friend, are close to mine and I am pleased to meet you.

Can there have been nothing good about the '60s? To become chronologically more exact about the period, I should date it as beginning in 1965 with the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley and closing with the resignation of Richard Nixon from the United States Presidency after the revelations of Watergate in 1974. The role of student and Left-wing protest in bringing about the withdrawal of US troops from Viet Nam, of which the protestants of the day were so exaltedly proud, must now receive credit as well for what happened after American withdrawal, which includes leaving Viet Nam in a death-grip of totalitarianism and permitting the massacre of millions in nearby Cambodia. Such progress as was made in the late 1950s and early '60s in race relations—and it was serious progress at the state and institutional levels—was in many respects nullified by the surgent black-consciousness movement, which claimed not only that "Black is Beautiful" but more than implied, corollarily, that white was mean, racist, and generally soulless, and in the process put an end to the dream of an integrated society, where things remain today. During the '60s, too, the black paint of oppression was picked up by women, by homosexuals, and by every other group that found it useful; if one weren't a member of a group that could claim a heritage of oppression—and almost everybody could set out such a claim—you were in bad shape psychologically. A society that felt itself so widely oppressed needed to discover a regular supply of oppressors, and here the nation's journalists came to the rescue, tirelessly pumping out fresh conspiracies, hidden plots, secret deals.

The investigative journalist Seymour Bob Halberstein (as I tend to think of him) became one of the heroes of the '60s. College-educated, usually middle- or upper-middle-class, secure and happy in his work, the investigative journalist, when successful, won fame and sometimes vast fortune from a society that he portrayed as corrupt, decayed, sick. A man well paid and highly honoured by his society for telling it how rotten it is, the investigative journalist lived a contradiction; and it is fitting that he be one of the heroic figures of a period in American life in which, for a long stretch, it appeared that the law of contradictions had been rescinded. It was the '60s, let us not forget, that brought us those splendid contradictions, not to say oxymorons, known as "open marriage", "free and easy abortion", and "repressive tolerance".

The '60s also brought us the initials SDS, JDL and LSD, not to speak of such non-acronymous but plenty acrimonious organisations as the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, and The Fair Play for Cuba Committee. It was a time of vast national yearning, when youth was revered and everyone, including the young, seemed to forget that the chief problem of youth is that it doesn't last. Men left their wives, wives smoked their adolescent children's marijuana, and everyone spoke—tsk, tsk—of the sad misunderstanding between the young and the adult known as the Generation Gap. Standards were lowered in education, Norman Mailer and Andy Warhol became leading figures in literature and art, and the misnomer "gay" entered the language as the official liberal word for homosexual. All kinds of essential responsibilities ceased to be people's "bag", and every kind of trivial irresponsibility became known as "doing one's thing". It wasn't quite a matter, in Yeats's famous formulation, of "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold"; it was more a matter of people taking joy in the prospect of things falling apart and nobody ever claiming to represent the centre. Really to hate it, you had only to have been there.

I was, and did; but not at first, and not unequivocally.

LET ME BEGIN WITH the year 1968, in some ways the height of the madness, the year of the riots at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the closest, perhaps, that America has come to having a year like 1848 in Europe. That year Hubert Humphrey was running against Richard Nixon, whose portrait then had primacy of place in my personal American political rogues' gallery. As a down-the-line, pull-

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the-lever man of the Left, I was not too keen on Humphrey either. He had an honourable record as a liberal on domestic matters, true enough; but on foreign policy, as Vice-President under Lyndon Johnson, he had become an Administration spokesman for continued prosecution of the Viet Nam War, which—again as a young man of the Left—I detested. Lyndon Johnson didn't leave those who worked for him much, especially in the way of dignity, and certainly this was true of poor Hubert Humphrey. Yet for me Hubert Humphrey had one powerful thing going for him in 1968—he was not Richard Nixon.

Around this time I attended, purely as a sightseer, a large rally in Grant Park in Chicago, a block or so away from the Conrad Hilton Hotel, headquarters of the Democratic Party during the Convention. I was there chiefly to see Jean Genet, the French novelist, who, along with Norman Mailer and Terry Southern, was in Chicago to cover the Convention for *Esquire* magazine. A compact little man with a bald head shaved on the sides, Genet was most unimpressive on the platform, muttering a few revolutionary banalities. Norman Mailer, who also spoke that afternoon, adopting a Southern non-commissioned officer's accent for his platform appearance, had not even attained the level of unimpressiveness; he was merely ridiculous. The principal theme of most speakers was the crudity of Mayor Daley, the brutality of the Chicago cops, the racism of the nation. And then the police arrived, perhaps a hundred of them. They lined up in formation outside the crowd; they had gas masks and billy-clubs. "Fuck the pigs", someone shouted, and then someone else threw a bottle into the police formation, and then another and yet another. That was the ball game. Gas masks were clamped on; tear-gas canisters let loose; the police, cutting a swathe with their clubs, marched through, dispersing the crowd, myself among it, choking with tear-gas.

THIS LITTLE OUTING was my initial, firsthand, hard evidence that an anti-war crowd was not necessarily an anti-violence crowd. Worse is better, said Lenin; and it was clear, at least to me, that most of the people who came to the protests connected with the 1968 Democratic Convention were interested in making things a whole lot worse—and as dramatically as possible. These same people knew they couldn't hope to bring off anything like the same spectacle at the Republican Convention. Their party was the Democrats, disaffected though they might be from it at present. The Democrats, they felt (and acted on the feeling), owed them sympathy, had to put up with them, could not with a clear conscience put them down, whereas the Republicans owed them nothing. As the time of the election drew nearer, it occurred to me that a vote for Hubert Humphrey meant a vote for greater chaos. Left-wing though I was, I was not for chaos, I was not for tearing down the universities, I was not for the party of Allen Ginsberg and Abbie Hoffman and Paul Goodman and Joan Baez and the revolution-in-consciousness, polymorphous, perverse, pot-minded, guitar-playing, commune-living culture of the radical Left. Of this I was convinced. Yet to vote my convictions I would have to vote for Richard Nixon, which, at that time, I could not do. To every liberal dilemma there is a liberal solution, usually involving political cowardice. Mine, as I recall, was not to vote, and to hope that Hubert Humphrey lost.

I refer to myself as a liberal, but I then thought of myself as a radical. "Radical" at that time seemed to me an honorific term; radical, as radicals used to be fond of pointing out, as in "going to the root causes" of any problem. Let pass that there was something terribly self-congratulatory about thinking oneself a deep-thinker, for after all that is what "going to the root" implies. Although I had worked as a director of an anti-poverty programme in Little Rock, Arkansas, I did not think of myself as in any serious sense a radical activist. I carried no placards; I took part in no demonstrations; I had not the least touch of what an acquaintance of mine, feeling a twinge of jealousy of people who went to jail for political causes, once called "subpoena envy". No, in thinking myself a radical I chiefly thought of myself as a man of the Left who believed things were radically wrong in the world and was not fearful of applying radical solutions to right them.

HOW DID I COME TO hold the political views I then held? That is a question I have pondered, and ponder still. Our politics come from the air we breathe, from our background, our prejudices, our social class, our ethnic origins, our education. Except perhaps in rare instances—and mine is not one of them—we do not arrive at our politics through careful, or even careless, reasoning. "You cannot", wrote Swift, "reason a person out of something he has not been reasoned into. . . ." Few of us having been reasoned into our politics, few can be reasoned out of them. I know that I have never lost a political argument in my life, a statement that will seem rather less impressive when to it I add that I have never really won a political argument either. And I have engaged in lots of political arguments, especially since, having reached the age of fifty, which after a reasonably well-mannered life I have unofficially declared the age of tactlessness, I do not hesitate to make my own views known. But what I have found is that arguing a person out of his politics is akin to arguing him out of his religion. Swift was correct; it cannot be done.

This much about my youthful politics I can say with moderate certainty: I did not acquire them at home, at least not directly. Mine must have been one of the least overtly political households on record. In his best-selling book on the Jewish immigrants to America, *World of Our Fathers*, Irving Howe implies a strong connection between Jews and the labour movement, and beyond that between Jews and socialist and utopian politics. This, though, was not the world of my father, nor of my father's father, both of whom were in business for themselves, the former very successfully, the latter rather dismally. I had an uncle, whom I never met, who died in the Spanish Civil War; but he appears to have been less a political character than an adventurer, one of those boys who, when he was fifteen, run away from home to go to sea. Politics was never more than a passing subject at our table, never anything remotely like a consuming one. As an

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adolescent, none of my friends was the least bit interested in politics, though I believe we all thought of ourselves, somehow or other, as Democrats, and this chiefly because Jews were not then Republicans, or at least we knew no Jewish Republicans.

Yet being Jewish, even if one wasn't at all an observant Jew, was a subtle influence upon one's political consciousness. Looking back, I at any rate feel it has been on mine. In an interesting essay entitled "Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement", the late Leonard Schapiro notes that some Jews threw themselves into revolutionary politics owing to oppression, but that even more did so in the belief that, with the coming of the revolution, they would be fully the equal of anyone in Russian society. Boy and man, I have never felt the least oppression in America owing to my Jewishness; but, as a child, in the 1940s, it was difficult not to know that there was a good deal of anti-Semitism in the United States, some of it quite open and some of it quite close to home. A country club less than a mile from where I lived did not permit Jews; many a nearby neighbourhood was (to use the term of the day) "restricted"; and there were restaurants, hotels, resorts where Jews did not attempt entrance.

As a small boy, I recall once returning from the school playground and chanting before my father, "Eenie, meenie, minie, moe/Catch a nigger by the toe", and his flying into a rage. My father was not a man easily enraged, but this was during World War II, when Jews in vast numbers were being killed in Europe, which my father, cooled down now, explained to me, rounding off his explanation by adding that "our people" had a special responsibility not to use a word like "nigger", which was a word of hate. Six or seven years old at the time, I remember taking his point, but also wondering what kind of world it was that would kill "our people". Out of the soil of such incidents does political consciousness take root and grow.

In my particular case, political consciousness grew very slowly indeed. Later, as a student at the University of Chicago, I met contemporaries, many of them from New York City, who had been reading *The Nation* and *The New Republic* since early in high school; in the '30s some of their parents had become enmeshed in sectarian politics, from which they never freed themselves, and about which, naturally enough, their children, from table talk alone, became fairly well informed. Politics was never part of the table talk in our home, unless it was a passing reference to some fresh piece of corruption at City Hall, and of this, in Chicago, there was never a paucity. But of politics in the larger sense—that is, of politics as an expression of views about how the world ought to be organised—there was no talk whatsoever. Had there been, I am not sure I would have been much interested in it. I seem to have been a fairly normal adolescent boy, which means that my head, filled with dreams of athletic glory and sex, had no room for visions of the good life lived through politics.

Just as well, I have no doubt. If I had had political views at fifteen or sixteen—as so many people who grew up in the Depression did—I should have been an insufferable little prig. At twenty or so, when I began to have such views, behind them were the standard set of proper liberal humanitarian principles. They were very moral—and, worse, moralising—and there was scarcely a war or an election or a politician of which I could not have told you the absolutely right and the absolutely wrong side. Need I add that I, invariably, was on the absolutely right side?

ALTHOUGH I WAS NOT a good student, I did go to a good school, the University of Chicago, whose implicit political orientation was liberal, even if none of the professors I encountered there pushed a liberal political line. But one had to be rather thick not to know that, in the 1956 election between General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson, for the thinking man there could be no real choice. (Ike and Adlai were supposed to have a meeting before the election, the comedian Mort Sahl joked at the time, but they had to call it off because they couldn't find an interpreter for Ike.) Along with providing me with some of the appropriate language with which to talk about politics, the University of Chicago put into my head the desire to be that odd combination of scholar and philosopher—without the learning of the former, or the depth of the latter—known as "an intellectual". Here was a fateful decision, for my politics and for my life.

In those years—the late 1950s—the decision to be an intellectual implied the decision to be something of an outsider. In the presidential elections of 1952 and 1956, for example, Adlai Stevenson was frequently referred to as an "egghead", the dysphemism for an intellectual (which, apart from his using language with some nicety, Stevenson really wasn't); and to be considered an intellectual was clearly a mark against him. To the larger society, to be an intellectual meant something insubstantial, untrustworthy, possibly even slightly dangerous. As a liberal has been defined as a person whose interests aren't at stake at the moment, so an intellectual has been defined as a person whose only stake is in his ideas. Intellectuals have often felt that this only proved their disinterestedness and hence redounded to their greater glory; non-intellectuals have construed it to mean only that intellectuals have nothing to lose—and, as any sensible businessman will tell you, you want to be a bit wary about entering into a deal with that sort of person.

Part of the pleasure for me of being an intellectual was in the position of permanent non-conformity it seemed to provide. (I had not then heard Harold Rosenberg's devastating phrase, "a herd of independent minds", which has on more than one occasion been pressed into service to describe the collective behaviour of intellectuals.) In *The Secret Agent*, Joseph Conrad remarks that "the way of even the most justifiable revolutions is prepared by personal impulses disguised into creeds. . . ." I know that, by the time I was in my late adolescence, the impulse of, or at any rate toward, nonconformity was already powerful in me. Mine was, I like to think, a non-conformity not of manner but of spirit. When I was in high school, for example, I was invited to join an exalted senior boys honour club, but turned it down—the first boy, I believe, in the history of the school to do so. It

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was my manner that got me invited; it was my spirit that would not permit me to join. At various times in my life, something in me has caused me to turn my back on conventional success, to swim out of the mainstream, to want to make do without the world's more obvious rewards. As a self-appointed intellectual, I was able to achieve all this in one swoop, for in determining to live my life for intellectual things I guaranteed forfeiture of a clearly tracked career, a normal middle-class existence, and anything resembling serious wealth.

As a self-appointed intellectual, I was also taking on a fairly heavy ideological cargo. My notion of what an intellectual was came in part through my sketchy undergraduate study of history—here I learned that Voltaire, that splendid trouble-maker, was an intellectual—but in even larger part through reading the intellectual journals of the day, which I began to do in a passionate way in my last year in college. Chief among these journals were *Partisan Review, Commentary, Dissent*, and ENCOUNTER. All, be it known, were strongly anti-Communist; but, let it also be known, none was pro-bourgeois or even mildly in favour of capitalism. These journals were edited by that species of the genus known as the New York intellectual (including ENCOUNTER, whose then co-editor was Irving Kristol). The New York intellectuals of the day seemed to me, viewed from a distance of 800 miles, brilliant and radical, the two qualities interwoven, each dependent upon the other. They were too clever (any longer) to be taken in by Communism, and also too clever to let up on criticising their own country. As David Riesman once put it, "Were not intellectuals of more use to this country when they had less use for it?" Intellectuals functioned, permanently, as a not particularly loyal opposition—or, to put it more precisely, as loyal principally to the idea of being in opposition.

The idea of being in permanent opposition suited both my temperament and my youthful recalcitrance. As a boost to my morale, I retained only the white squares in the chequered history of intellectuals in politics: the distrust they had often shown for empty authority, their yearning for moral equality, their hunger for social justice, their belief in the possibility of greater freedom of a kind that would perhaps one day bring nearer the prospect of an earthly paradise. I now also began to read history rather more selectively, with an eye out for intellectual heroism. Men who could make moot the question of which was more powerful, the pen or the sword, by possessing both particularly impressed me: T. E. Lawrence, André Malraux, Leon Trotsky. I soon became fairly well-read in not the workers' but the intellectuals' revolution of 1917 in Russia, for the Russian Revolution was nothing if not a revolution choreographed, orchestrated, and staged by intellectuals. Although I now believe (not entirely without evidence) that the Russian Revolution was one of the great catastrophes of world history, I none the less know more about it than I do about the American Revolution, and probably even now know more Russian than American history; I can tell you a good deal more about the Decembrists, for example, than I can about the Presidential administrations of Van Buren, Harrison, and Polk. Nor, my guess is, am I alone among intellectuals in this regard. The reason, I strongly suspect, is that intellectuals tend to become highly stimulated by revolution—by the actuality, the prospect, even the idea of it. In *Hope Against Hope*, Nadezhda Mandelstam noted:

> "My brother Evgeni Yakovlevich used to say that the decisive part in the subjugation of the intelligentsia was played not by terror and bribery (though God knows there was enough of both), but by the word 'Revolution', which none of them could bear to give up. . . ."

By the time I graduated from college, at the age of twenty-one, my politics were pretty well set for the next decade. I should describe these politics as highbrow liberalism. A student of literature, a devotee of Proust and Joyce and Kafka, I discovered a way to carry over my tastes in literature to politics by choosing British models: George Bernard Shaw's socialism, John Maynard Keynes's economics, E. M. Forster's "aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky". A continental modernist in literature, an English Fabian in politics, Brooks Brothers in dress—Hey, Daddy, they didn't make 'em much more sensitive, considerate and plucky than I at twenty-one.

YET I DON'T WISH to make too much fun of my younger self. For one thing, he can't fight back: for another, there is a lot about the kid that I really like. I think he was genuinely offended by the world's injustice. I think he would have done what he could to have diminished it; and, in extenuation of the fact that he didn't do anything to do so, it must be added that nobody else had many bright ideas on the subject at the time. But this much must be said against him: there was undeniably an element of snobbery in his youthful politics. Leftism was not so endemic among the educated classes then as now. The writers from whom he took many of his political notions—Lewis Mumford, Paul Goodman, C. Wright Mills—were still a minority taste. He considered himself a radical, true enough, but above and beyond that he thought of himself as a member of an even smaller band, an unashamed idealist. This put him, he felt, in a select company of the happy few—and the important thing always about the happy few is that, in politics and in culture, the fewer the better.

Why, though, didn't the snobbery inherent in my youthful politics as easily turn me Rightward? Why was I not an admirer of the intellectuals around *L'Action Française* or the cultural theories of T. S. Eliot? Why didn't I insert a first initial in front of my name (F. Joseph Epstein), carry a walking stick, deplore progress and modernisation, and live in America as if I were in exile, as I have noted many a Right-wing youth do in the 1980s? Too strong a sense of the absurd, I should say. Then there is the unblinkable fact that much of Right-wing intellectual life has been besmirched by anti-Semitism. (So, as I would later learn, has been a good deal of Left-wing intellectual life.) But the attraction of Left over Right was also to be found in snobbery of a kind—in this instance, moral snobbery.

The Right is the side of the liver, as everyone knows, the

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Left that of the heart. To be on the Left, then, was to be on the side of the large-hearted, the good, and (though the odious term had not yet come into vogue) the "caring". Part of the appeal of being on the Left is that it puts one among the implicitly virtuous, and to believe virtue is on one's side is no small thing in politics. (Just now, a belief in its own superior virtue—see Mario Cuomo's keynote spech at the 1984 Democratic Convention—may be all that the Left in America has remaining to it, but it is a lot.) While on the Right, one can always accuse the fellow to the Left of one of being unrealistic, which is nice. But on the Left, one can always accuse the fellow to the Right of one of being cold and callous, selfish and insensitive, which is better. I know that, when on the Left, I always did, and I found it exhilarating.

My politics fitted in nicely with my chosen vocation. I wanted to be a writer, not an easy thing to be, in America or any other country, for, unlike many another line of work, there wasn't much room for mediocrity—at least not at the level of writing to which I aspired. If I failed, my politics would prop me up. Being an anti-capitalist, after all, how could I hope to succeed under a system I condemned? (In later years, I would appreciate the rich irony with which capitalism seemed to reward its enemies; I am thinking here of such best-selling novelists as E. L. Doctorow, Kurt Vonnegut, and Robert Coover.) Being an anti-capitalist and hence being able to blame capitalism—often known more simply as "the System"—for any failure I might encounter through my own lack of talent or absence of energy not only provided me with a fine fall-back position, but permitted me to view anyone who laboured at workaday jobs in the System with a rather lofty contempt. Even if I didn't win, in other words, I couldn't lose.

Every idea has its psychological uses. The chief use of the political ideas I held when young was to make me feel quietly but confidently superior. Their other use was to furnish me with something I thought was a point of view but realise now was only a set of opinions. The problem with such opinions is that they can intercede between experience and feeling, colouring the one and blocking the other. I recall a particularly vivid instance of this when I was a soldier, an enlisted man, in basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in the late 1950s. Our company was returning from a 25-mile march undertaken with full 40-pound packs, steel helmets, and rifles. (I laboured under the additional weight of the autumn number of *Partisan Review* in the pocket of my field-jacket.) The day was clear, the weather crisp, we were within a mile of reaching our company area, our whippet-lean black sergeant, Andrew Atherton, was booming out cadence count; and, flushed with pleasure at having survived a minor hardship and filled with camaraderie shared with the men in my platoon, I thought, "God, this is fine!"—when, wait a minute, I remembered that, as a socialist and a man of the Left, I hated the military and all it stood for. And so I finished the final mile of the march in a proper mood of cynical detachment.

Our opinions can exert a powerful tyranny over us, especially when we are simultaneously uncertain whence they derive yet nevertheless determined to live lives congruent with them. One of the advantages that the Left has over any other political grouping in the struggle for the minds of the young is that it provides them with the most complete set of opinions. In my own youthful time, I held them all. One might imagine a free-association game called Left-Wing, in which one responds quickly to flash-cards: Business—"A swindle". The Military—"Barbarian institution". Conventional Patriotism—"For Mencken's Booboisie". Religion —"Opiate of the people; also beside the point". Racism —"Endemic in America". Then the Left provides a rich cast of conspirators and secret controllers of society: Wall Street, Madison Avenue, the CIA, the FBI, the Military-Industrial Complex, and so on into the dark night. In the Left-wing mind, people are regularly polluting, poisoning, pillaging, corrupting, carcinogenating. There are the utility boys, agri-business, the pharmaceutical companies, the lobbyists, and surely I don't have to mention the weapons manufacturers. It's a wonder that a reader of *The Nation* can get any sleep at all.

Even in my hardiest, most confident, Left-wing days, I never suffered the full political paranoia available on the Left, but was not above doing what I now think of as "an opinion check" as a means of judging not only acquaintances but writers and public figures. As a young writer, I published essays on Henry Luce and Adlai Stevenson that were essentially opinion checks. In other words, I investigated their public utterances and writings and publications to discover what their opinion was on this or that issue or event, question or problem. Where their opinions differed from my own, which were the standard received liberal wisdom of the day, I found them wanting.

I do not mean to mock the importance of opinions. I have lost friends over opinions, as I suspect many an intellectual has, for opinion is the chief stock-in-trade of the intellectual. As George Santayana says, "The person of the friend is distinguished and selected from all others because of exceptionally acceptable ways of acting, thinking, and feeling about other things or persons. . . ." Yet, in the realm of opinion, conservatives have a natural advantage over liberals. Conservatives may think what they believe; liberals may only think good thoughts (except, of course, about those who disagree with them). Conservatives can often surprise one with the large discrepancy between their opinions and their actions. I think here of H. L. Mencken, behind nearly every one of whose harsh opinions one can find a kindly action that contradicts it. Liberals, being under the burden of espousing lofty opinions, can only disappoint—and usually do. With only a single exception, which I shall come to presently, I have never met a liberal who did anything serious to help any member of the working classes, apart from giving money to one or another cause (and the test of giving, I have always believed, is not how much one gives but how much, after having given, one has left), or allowing one's maid to call one by one's first name. The truly large-hearted people whom I have either known or heard about—a middle-aged woman in Chi-

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cago who has given her life to looking after stray animals, Mother Teresa of Calcutta—seem to be above politics.

The one exception in my lifetime that I can think of is the behaviour of certain young white men and woman during the glory years of the Civil Rights movement. These were the years between the first sit-ins in the late 1950s through the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, shortly after which whites were told by young blacks in the movement, in effect, to bug off. But these young men and women put their heads on the block for a cause; and a good cause it was, perhaps the last altogether morally clear cause in the politics of this nation: the removal from the books of a number of Southern states of certain indisputably unjust laws. To challenge these laws required courage, physical as well as moral courage, from blacks and white alike; and if I underscore here the efforts of whites I do so only because, in the highest sense, their contribution to the Civil Rights movement of those days was the more immediately disinterested.

I WAS LIVING IN the South during a part of this time, and, though never called to the test of physical courage, was greatly impressed by those who came through the test—and, in the case of some Civil Rights workers, came through it again and again. When lives are risked (and sometimes lost) in a good cause, it enhances—ennobles, even—both the lives and the cause. Living in the South at that time was strange in many respects, not least among them that one's life revolved round a single political issue: race. How one felt about segregation-integration defined one. One's opinion on this subject not merely loomed large but eclipsed the moon and the sun. It was all and it was everything. Karl Jaspers used to claim that each of us is our situation personified. For nearly everyone living in the South, race was *the* situation, and it took over nearly everyone's life. Living in the South in the early 1960s must have been a little like living in South Africa during the past few years.

It was during that time, when I worked as the director of the Anti-Poverty Programme in Little Rock, Arkansas, that the salad of illusions I now think of as my liberalism began first to show signs of wilting. Such a job demonstrated that social arrangements were not as malleable as one might have thought. Large infusions of Federal money, such as the Anti-Poverty Programme then offered, tended to excite the greed and corruption in everyone. To cite but a single instance, when in Little Rock a Legal Aid Programme was set up under the Anti-Poverty Programme, the secret political hope was that the poor, now supplied with lawyers, would sue the city and the school district and other institutions that had ostensibly made life all the harder for them. Instead the poor tended to sue one another. Blacks, as all but a liberal of my kind would have recognised at the outset, were fully the equal of whites in self-interest, greed, and petty-mindedness. My sentimental education was beginning to be under way at last.

There remained, however, the thrill of virtue, which liberalism, like many a religion, holds out to its adherents and which I was myself not yet ready to relinquish. Even after the *coup de grâce* was delivered to the Civil Rights movement by the racist ranting of Stokeley Carmichael, H. Rapp Brown, the Black Panthers, and other of the madder brothers, I still did not want to forgo my belief in its righteousness. Or was it my own righteousness in which I did not wish to forgo my belief?

Shortly after the Free Speech Movement got under way at the Berkeley campus in 1965, soon spreading to other universities around the country, violence began to be threatened more and more insistently. At first this violence was to be upon property and not upon people, but when the riots broke out in such cities as Newark, Los Angeles (Watts), and Chicago, the line between property and people became more than a little blurry. Under the direction of Martin Luther King, Jr., the power and the glory of the Civil Rights movement derived in great part from its brilliant deployment of Gandhian non-violent resistance, which lent the cause of civil rights in the South a splendid moral authority. I may have been a hypocrite but I was not entirely a fool. I was not one of those people on the Left who, to use their word, "empathised" with the rioters in black slums or with the students who took over buildings and destroyed university property, including in some instances professors' manuscripts. Thugs were thugs, violence violence; and when violence is approved, or even sympathetically understood, a social movement has taken a serious turn from which it cannot hope ever to re-turn.

AS SOMEONE WHO WANTED to continue to think himself a man of the Left, much that was now going on in Left-wing circles felt to me very wrong. It was clearly wrong, I felt, for professors beyond the draft age to encourage their students to burn their draft cards as a protest against the Viet Nam War. It was wrong for a twerpy journalist named Andrew Kopkind, in *The New York Review of Books*, to instruct Martin Luther King, Jr. that "morality starts at the barrel of a gun". It was wrong for Lewis Mumford, in the pages of *The New Yorker*, to link Richard Nixon's name alongside those of Hitler and Stalin as among the moral monsters of the 20th century—wrong for a writer who claimed an historical imagination to be so historically ignorant, and wrong for a magazine as reputable as *The New Yorker* to let him get away with such ignorance. It was wrong, and comic into the bargain, that Mr and Mrs Leonard Bernstein would throw a fund-raising party for the Black Panthers, though fortunate that they were obtuse enough to invite Tom Wolfe to it. It was wrong, and not at all comic, that the radical Left would at the first opportunity declare itself anti-Israel (wrong but scarcely surprising, given Marx's opinion that the Jews were a kind of recurrent international disease produced from the intestines of bourgeois society). That such wretched excesses had long qualified as part of the traditions of the Left any reader of Stendhal, Balzac, Henry James, and Conrad ought to have known. "Everything is eternal", as Santayana once remarked, "except our attention."

Yet one mustn't blame Christianity because of the quality of the Christians—or so at the time I continued to feel, substituting Leftism and Leftists for Christianity and Christians.

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In other words, there was nothing wrong with the Left, I decided; it was only Leftists I abhorred. Virtue, as the subtitles of the old melodramas often read, finds a way. True enough, this position of mine kept my sweet virtue intact, but this does not mean that, whatever my falsity on that front, I did not immensely despise what, in the late 1960s and early '70s, was going on in the name of Left-wing politics, and especially in what I think can properly be termed Left-wing culture. Here, of course, I have in mind drugs, let-it-all-hang-out sex, and the general idealisation of youth that infiltrated so much in the life of the country.

I might have felt differently about all this if I had been say, five years younger—if, that is, in 1968, I were twenty-six instead of thirty-one. If I were twenty-six, unmarried, without responsibilities, I may well have loved every moment of the vaunted '60s culture: puffin' on the good stuff, rappin' the nights away, making plenty of love and no war whatsoever. Yet not my age but my having two stepsons in their teens made this impossible. To have teenage children in one's charge during those years gave a whole new sour perspective to the Age of Aquarius. One saw kids frying their brains kitchen-testing drugs: one saw all discipline break down in high schools, especially middle- and upper-middle-class schools; one saw that ultimate act of racism well under way, not asking the same standards of performance from black kids as one asked from whites (and then eventually lowering those asked from whites), all in the name of good-heartedness (liberal version). So much garbage in the air, if a slight euphemism will be allowed, and everybody rushed to turn on fans.

HAD I BEEN five or so years younger and unmarried, I should also have had to face the question of what to do about the draft. It is one thing to burn one's draft card; quite another to have one's government burn it. Had I been drafted, would I have served in the Army? Opposed to the Viet Nam War though I was, I am confident that I would not have had the courage to declare myself a conscientious objector if it meant a certain prison term, with the prospect such a term held out of such jailish delights as, say, homosexual rape, which has never been my idea of a swell time. Would I have fled the country, jumped to Sweden or, more conveniently, to Canada, where I have relatives? Doubtful. More likely, I suspect, as with so many of the confrères of my social class, I should have saved my rosy middle-class bottom by hieing it off to one graduate school or another, where, unmolested, allowing the poor boys and the black boys to fight this nasty little war, I could protest in peace if not quiet.

I must say that I am extremely grateful never to have had to make that choice. Had I chosen to avoid the draft through hiding out in graduate school, behind *alma mater*'s skirts, I should my life long have been in doubt about the authenticity of my protest: was it the war in Viet Nam I hated or the above-mentioned rosy middle-class bottom I loved? It has always seemed to me that the authenticity of the anti-war protest movement of the 1960s generally has been in doubt, owing to the undeniable fact that, though the war slogged on to its horrendous conclusion, once the United States draft law was abrogated all protest abated (so to speak) radically. I do not claim a pattern here, but in recent months I have talked with two men, both in their early forties (one a professor of English at a Southern university, the other an editor in Chicago), who separately told me they had misgivings about not serving in Viet Nam. One felt that that war was the central experience of his generation, and he had missed it. The other felt a plain bad conscience about letting the working class do all the fighting, and he regretted it.

Visited with no such complicating emotions, I was able to hate the Viet Nam War with a cool and even-handed contempt. When such figures as General Westmoreland, Robert McNamara, and (for reasons now lost to me) particularly Dean Rusk appeared upon my television screen, I felt the want of a brick. What, I now ask myself, made me so angry? There was of course the lying, there was the ineptitude, there was the sense of sheer waste. But every war offers such spectacles. No, I think I was offended by what I construed to be the immorality of this war. In its foreign policy, my country was not as moral as I should have liked—not to put too fine a point on it, it was not as moral as I.

I WAS NEVER pro-Communist; I was never for a moment so deluded as such heavy American thinkers as Susan Sontag, Noam Chomsky, and Mary McCarthy, who believed in the gentle, peace-loving people of North Viet Nam. Yet nowhere is it written, or so I then apparently believed, that one could not be anti-Communist and anti-American both. I was in those days, I now see, a plague-on-both-your-houses man; and, as generally is the case with such men, I had even more complaints about the house I happened to be living in: the United States. And yet, why? Why did I wish my country to lose a war that we all know, or ought to have known, to have been a war against a tyrannous Communist country that immediately proved its true nature after its victory? If someone had asked me this question then, I think I might have mumbled something about our betraying our ideals in this war. (I now think that all we betrayed were the non-Communist countries of South-east Asia.) I now think that my anti-Americanism was a part of my believing myself to be a man of the Left—and hence anti-military; and part of my believing myself to be an intellectual (here I still do believe this)—and hence someone whose first duty is to criticise his country. I was locked into clichés and false traditions of my own choosing.

If you think these clichés and false traditions are not powerful, you are mistaken. Take, for example, the three great American political trials of this century: Sacco-Vanzetti, Hiss-Chambers, the Rosenberg Case. As anyone who has even dipped a big toe in the oceanic literature of those trials knows, one could easily drown in their vast and choppy waters. Yet, being a man of the Left, self-declared, I took it as axiomatic that Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent, that Hiss was framed, and that the Rosenbergs, though probably guilty, should nevertheless not have been excuted. I took all this as so because I assumed that every political trial was essentially a rerun of the Dreyfus trial, with the government

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being in the wrong, the defendant a victim, the proceedings in some way rigged on the side of injustice. Some may argue that this is healthy intellectual scepticism; I would argue that it is automatic Left-wing thinking—that, with its taste for conspiracies and its distaste for authority, it goes with the liberal-Left territory. (For the record, I have since come to believe that Sacco and Vanzetti were probably guilty, that Hiss clearly was, and that the Rosenbergs absolutely were, though still they didn't deserve to be executed.)

Another Left-wing axiom, this one involving a paradox, is the belief in progress joined with the refusal to admit that much has ever been made—or, where some progress has indisputably been made, the denial of its importance. This is conjoined with the liberal-Left belief in the slippery slope, which holds that one false political step could not merely send a society rolling down a hill but more likely start an avalanche. One sees the slippery-slope argument brought into play in the contemporary university fairly frequently. When one suggests, for example, that professors ought not to be permitted to teach courses that provide sheer political propaganda—at my own university, for example, a famous Left-wing journalist this past year taught a course entitled "Reagan and The Crisis of the Modern Presidency"—one is warned of the slippery slope: start telling people what they cannot teach and pretty soon you will be telling them exactly what they can teach and pretty soon you will have a McCarthy-like atmosphere and . . . in short, you will have slid down the slippery slope, with an avalanche of the Inquisition, Fascism, McCarthyism, and Salem witch-burning to follow.

FOR AN INTERESTING EXAMPLE of these axioms and assumptions at work, permit me to draw attention to an extremely well-written essay that appeared in the Spring 1973 issue of Irving Howe's *Dissent*, under the title "The New Conservatives: Intellectuals in Retreat". Close readers will note that the very title is a dead giveaway. *Retreat?* From what? From the spirit of Onward Left-wing Soldier, it turns out. The gravamen of the essay is that a number of intellectuals —among them Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Norman Podhoretz, and Nathan Glazer—have left the political fray, chiefly through an uncritical acceptance of something that looks suspiciously like the *status quo*. A careful polemicist, the author of this essay begins by giving these intellectuals full credit for their devastating criticisms of radical excess, and joins them in their condemnation of the antinomian strain of that "congeries of personalities, organisations, and trends that went by the name of 'the Movement'" during the late 1960s and early '70s. But haven't they, he now asks, gone too far in the other direction?

His is, of course, a rhetorical question. Damn right they have gone too far in the other direction. They have come to accept such Tory notions as that the chief responsibility for reform may not fall upon the government; that personal reform may not be a task that government regulation can bring about at all: that the arrangements of society are immensely complex and ought not to be tinkered with until we have a reasonably sophisticated understanding of them; and that—unforgivably—we must recognise that in many areas of American life real progress has been made and ought not to be gainsaid. Granting the subtlety and high intelligence of these new conservatives, our author none the less concludes that:

> ". . . the bitter sadness is that . . . [the new conservatism] may well end up a more genuine obstacle to the alleviation of social pain than the obtuse and retrograde conservatism of the privileged that preceded it."

Our author—"Hey", as the kids nowadays say, "you gotta love him!" Maybe, though, you don't, if only because it is evident that he sure loves himself. Note that sensitive phrasing—that "bitter sadness", that "social pain". Note, too, how neatly he has positioned himself politically. There he stands, triumphantly in the middle, the red hordes ('60s radicals, *et alia*) to his left, the Black Hundreds (conservatives old and new) to his right, a good man ready to continue to fight the good fight. One can almost hear him humming to himself as he completed this essay, "Give me one man who's a stout-hearted man, and I'll soon give you. . . ." Perhaps I can hear him better than you, because it was I who wrote that essay.

THE ONLY USE THAT THAT ESSAY has for me today is to delineate with some precision what my politics were in the spring of 1973. As a document in the history of my opinions, it shows me to be a still fairly young man (at thirtysix) who has quite had it with the anti-democratic, pro-counter-culture antics of the Left of the day but someone who is not yet ready to eschew the label of Left, nor with it the appearance of high public virtue necessary to the political type I once termed "the Virtucrat". Not dramatically, but gradually over the next four or so years, this too would change. Far from wishing to retain a sentimental attachment to the Left, I developed a strong antipathy to it—strong enough, at any rate, not to mind thinking of myself as anti-Left. How did this happen? Somehow I have the feeling that explaining it by saying that I got smarter is not going to be adequate. Too bad, because I think that is what happened.

I am well aware of the cliché that has it that as one becomes older, better established, perhaps achieves a modicum of success in the world, one becomes more conservative. Irving Kristol once remarked that he has come "to believe that an adult's 'normal' political instincts should be conservative", which is a kindly way of formulating it. A less kindly way is to remark—as people on the Left do—that as some people grow old they get hardening of the arteries, especially those that lead to the heart. I am not sure that growing older has all that much to do with political change. What I think does change is the strength of the emotional investment one has had in certain political ideas in one's youth. Some people—some astonishingly successful people—can never shake these ideas; and some others—I think here of the current-day university—live in an environment where holding on to the ideas of one's youth ensures the security that, in a contentious atmosphere, only careful conformity can provide.

In my particular case, nothing dramatic—no falling star, no shaft of sunlight on the forest floor, no weekend spent staring at the ocean—caused me to shed what I now think the politi-

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cal illusions of earlier years. Instead, as illusions most often do, mine decayed and fell away, rather like baby teeth. Like baby teeth, too, some of these illusions needed to be nudged, even yanked a bit before they came out. Here reading joined with observation helped enormously. Coming upon Edward Shils's *The Intellectuals and The Powers, and Other Essays* gave me a more rounded view of intellectuals than any I had had before: of their social origin, their multifarious functions, their propensity for mischief-making, and also their grandeur. One illusion that Professor Shils's book knocked permanently out of my head was that intellectuals ought to consider themselves in permanent critical opposition to the society in which they live. I was especially lucky in living in the same city as Edward Shils, whom I met and who befriended me. I discovered that there were no seams between his writing and his life: what he wrote, he lived. Belief and action are for him utterly congruent, and this requires a consistency and courage that one rarely finds in the world, and even more rarely among people who think themselves intellectuals. Intrinsically, the categories of Left and Right had little to do with the intellectual vocation; the attempt to grasp the truth in something approximating its complexity, through learning, insight, and common sense, had everything to do with it. Such were among the lessons taught by Edward Shils, in his books and through the example of his life.

Around the time I met Edward Shils I also began, at the age of thirty-seven, a career as a university teacher. The year was 1974, and though the revolution of the 1960s was officially over, it didn't always seem so on university campuses. It was Edward Shils who once described the '60s to me in the metaphor of an enormous wave that rolled over the country, then slowly rolled back, but not without leaving a vast amount of debris on the beach. The university, I now at first hand came to see, was the beach. Debris was everywhere. It was found in university teachers (obviously not all of them) casually sleeping with their students; it was in a curriculum that was increasingly organised less to educate students than to please them; it was there in the new teacher-evaluations that students were encouraged to make; it was there, perhaps above all, in the newly organised consciousness-raising academic units known as Afro-American Studies and Women's Studies.

And as the years went by, it would not get better. It would get worse, as the young graduate students and instructors of the 1960s grew into the associate and full professors of the '80s. Marxism became a hot item, and scarcely any academic department in the humanities and social science (with the exception, interestingly, of economics) felt it could carry on without one or two Marxists. Open protest, it is true, was now for the most part *passé*, left to those small student groups who, over divestment in South Africa or US involvement in Central America, could work off their '60s envy by marching with a banner or building a shack in front of the administration building. But open protest isn't any longer needed; no need to carry placards outside the gates when the barbarians are already inside, boring—in all senses of the word—from within.

When I say "the barbarians", I mean a modest number of hard-core characters who actively proselytise students and teach a fairly straightforward Marxist menu: featuring distaste for America, in peace and war; unstinting admiration for the struggles of the people of the Third World; hatred of capitalism; and that old favourite, the class struggle, served with a generous side-order of alienation.

Nothing new about any of this. What is new is the general tolerance of this dreary fare. The tolerance is so great because the general spirit prevailing in the preponderance of contemporary universities is that of liberalism. But it is liberalism that has lost its moorings, and which stands chiefly for tolerance for activities well to its own Left and is finally convinced only of its own virtue. When a liberal myself, I used to wonder why people so despised liberals. I used to think it was owing to the liberal's avoidance of extremes, of his desire always to occupy the middle ground. No longer a liberal, I no longer think liberalism is, in its contemporary incarnation, informed by balance and fairness; I think it is instead motivated by fear and self-righteousness. Midge Decter once remarked that we should do away with the word "liberal", which has lost its old character anyway, and simply substitute for it the word "Left". There is something to that; I would only add that to catch the spirit of the new liberalism we require the adjective "weak" before the noun "Left".

It is not easy to convince people who live outside the university—though it is evident to anyone who lives within it—that in the United States there are two political cultures: the culture of the country, which has twice now elected Ronald Reagan; and the culture of the university, in which, if an election were held today between Ronald Reagan and Louis Farakhan, the outcome would not be all that easy to predict. (The largest number of votes, my guess is, would be abstentions.) It is this political culture, for the most part composed of the weak Left, that makes possible the almost continuous inroads of Marxism, Feminism, and other isms too numerous to mention. As a rather chaotic teacher at my own university once put it at the close of a memorandum proposing an honours seminar in "gender and literature", our school, and in particular our department, had shown itself woefully behind the times in not having more such courses. When I suggested that being behind the times in this regard might not be such a bad thing, I received looks that could only be described as strange. When I went on to say that I was concerned about the built-in political content of such a course, it was as if I had loudly belched at a small dinner party for the French Ambassador. How gauche! But then in the contemporary university just about everything that is not *gauche* is gauche.

Not in every university, I hasten to add, but chiefly in those that think of themselves as the better universities. Thus, the faculty at Stanford makes plain that it is not eager to have the Reagan Library; thus, when Harvard is beset by Left-wing demonstrations against speakers, it boldly steps in and cancels the speeches; thus, school after school proudly announces it is divesting itself of its South African holdings, all

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duly reported in the section of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* called "The Divestment Watch". There is a very heavy traffic in the universities caused by everyone rushing to get on the right side.

In my anger at what I think of as the weakness of the contemporary universities and its baleful effects on the life of the country, am I merely like Ambrose Bierce's conservative, "who is enamoured of existing evils, as distinguished from the liberal who wishes to replace them with others"? In politics, is it enough to know what one doesn't like? Do not one's aversions and fears imply preferences and desires? On this score, after my early years of looking at the world from the Left, I must say that today any revolutionary zeal I might once have felt is quite gone. Having come through what I have to conclude is something in the nature of a political deprogramming, I feel like Henry James's young hero Hyacinth Robinson, in *The Princess Casamassima*, of whom James writes:

> "What was supreme in his mind today was not the idea of how the society that surrounded him should be destroyed; it was much more the sense of the wonderful precious things it had produced, of the fabric of beauty and power it had raised."

Like Hyacinth, after dropping my Leftism, I feel the world has become a more interesting place—and I mean the world as it is. I have no strong impulse to reform it, outside those pockets of alterable injustice and organised cruelty, where change is necessary. I wish people were wiser and better—I wish *I* were wiser and better—but I know of no clear or certain way to bring this about. I no longer see life as requiring a crescendo of reform, in which every day and in every way my neighbourhood, my city, my nation, the world gets better and better. I haven't the least hint how to bring this about, and I am not sure I would if I could. I only wish the world, my nation, my city, my neighbourhood to be more habitable: less dangerous, less diseased, less dirty, less dreary. I do not want people to suffer, and I am willing to do all that I can to alleviate this suffering, but I am fairly certain that the old Left-wing methods of bringing about this alleviation are less than worthless—they are often, as in the case of so many welfare programmes, part of the problem. I do not expect the United States to behave itself with greater moral rectitude than any nation in the history of the world simply because it is the country in which I live and therefore must come up to my standards of rectitude. I expect it instead to act in a rough consensus of what its citizens judge to be its self-interest, protecting itself from its enemies, coming to the aid of its friends, ensuring its own continued prosperity and hence that of its people. In sum, I haven't a utopian notion in my head, and I do not expect to have another such notion this side of the grave.

Shedding my Left-wing views has left me much happier without, so far as I can see, making anyone else in the world more miserable (except perhaps those who violently disagree with what I write). But then figures on the Left—Marx, Bakunin, Bentham, Mill, Lenin, Trotsky, reformers or revolutionaries—are not a famously happy crew. Being on the Left, they are not supposed to be happy, for surely the whole point of being on the Left is that one is dissatisfied with the world as it is and ardently desires to change it. I do not mean to say that being Leftist condemns one to being humourless. Not at all. But there is, not so very deep down, an element of serious and perhaps immitigable discontent with life, of discomfiture with the world as it is, that turns most people Left to begin with and that must remain if they are to stay on the Left.

As a writer, someone primarily interested in understanding and not changing the world, I found removing the furry blinkers worn throughout my Left-wing youth an immense aid. In my writing I no longer did opinion checks; I no longer sought out heroes and villains through the measure of whether a particular figure's views gibed with my own. Whereas once such men as Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller would have been boobs and rotters to me, I now found them, not necessarily heroic, but extremely interesting. Cliché terms such as "the Robber Barons" no longer held any real meaning; nor could they for anyone who cared to investigate that fascinating and varied generation in the round and without the bandages of ideology that a committed Left-wing writer such as, say, E. L. Doctorow prefers to wear. For myself, once the blinkers of liberalism came off, the present became much more enticing than the future—the way the world *is* became a subject of greater fascination than the way it *ought* to be.

To say that one has shed one's Leftist views, even to think oneself anti-Left, does not necessarily mean—I know it doesn't in my case—that one has automatically acquired the reverse of these views. In striving not to be deluded, for example, I don't think one has to drop one's compassion; in some respects, I have come to believe, it can grow even greater. Nor need all idealism begin, as Left-wing idealism does, in dissatisfaction. Not all idealism, corollarily, need be invested in hope, where it is almost certain to be disappointed and turn sour; there is also the idealism of the actual, those instances of actual courage, altruism, and goodness. Released from bondage to the whole-earth catalogue of Left-wing views, one can take up more modulated and realistic ones.

I have, for example, recently seen H. L. Mencken and Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes described as approving capitalist economics without approving capitalist culture. On the practical level, I understand this to mean that one is permitted to approve the system of rewards for initiative and hard work that is at the heart of capitalism and still despise, say, the Waldenbook chain because it treats what it sells as no more than another commodity. Under socialism, I hear my younger self stepping in to say, there would be no Waldenbooks. True enough. Unfortunately, under socialism, thus far along, there hasn't been much culture either.

I no longer have to be *for* some hopelessly vague entity called the Third World, an entity that includes Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. Instead I can attempt to distinguish among those Third World countries that are run by clowns, those run

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by butchers, and those genuinely struggling with horrendous problems. I no longer have to give a hustler such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson special dispensation from criticism because he is a black man. (How fine it was to read, as I recently did in a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., that King, too, greatly distrusted Jesse Jackson!) I can agree with George Orwell, who was of course staunchly anti-totalitarian, that all revolutions are failures but that they aren't all the same failure—but I can add, because unlike Orwell I do not consider myself a socialist, that they sure are beginning to look like damn-near the same failure.

My political deprogramming has given me a fine new sense of intellectual freedom. The impulse to criticism always came readily enough to me, but I see that formerly it only did so within the constraints of Left-wing catechism. Now I feel fully free to criticise any thing or anyone, from any side or angle. Better yet, I feel free *not* to criticise—not everywhere to find the connection between something I don't like and late-Capitalism, to discover over and over again that my country is not finally good enough for me, or to blame something called "the System" for my own deficiencies of talent and character. Without such false, if not to say wholly imaginary, connections, discoveries, and accusations, the world seems a livelier, a brighter, an altogether more interesting place. At the age of fifty-seven, Henry James, unable to bear any longer the beard he had worn for several years, shaved it off, after which he wrote to his brother William that he felt "*forty* and clean and light". There are, I have come to realise, other ways to acquire that same feeling without having to shave off a beard.

Falling Inwards Like The Sand

Sail boats threaded by light
on the dimpled gong of the sea;
a black-backed gull, proud, alone
on rocks the colour of grey time;
and from the tilted headland
buttered with primrose and celandine
owning this scene of deep blue
richly-pacified sea, I am
obsessed with echoes of gone lives:
toilers of what forgotten seas?

I see them, little groups of people
and precarious boats,
trawlers of the combered brine,
hauling nets to lazy beaches
on clement forgotten days;
shells flowering under their boots
and in the glitter of rivulets
fine grains falling inwards always:
men and women outside great events,
leavers of no marks on time;
whose bones lie inland
in churchyards under elms
or lost in the foreclosing deep.

Yet those are the people who knew,
if any, the salt truths
and beauties of life—
the struggle that repays—
and it is their simplicity
I am left to envy
before this empty frame of sea,
this summer's bay
murmuring with water and light. . .
their voices and images gone
forever into sepia'd memory,
falling inwards always like the sand.

William Oxley

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John Mowat

Violators Towed Away

THE CAR McDONALD left for Cosgrove, the Englishman, to use in California he described as his "reliable old Ford Falcon". It was a straightforward phrase in a series of letters which otherwise used language lifted from the detritus of a shattered computer. McDonald spoke of *skeds, inputs, spin-offs* and *up-dates*. "Should I buy thermal underwear?" he asked. "Assure me I won't always be cold." The last letter before he arrived hinted at "interesting news. That's called a teaser ad in the world of advertising." McDonald, when they met, was a tough guy in his fifties with his grey hair combed forward in an athlete's cut. He had long limbs as if he were constructed from collapsible tent-poles. Despite his name he looked no more Scottish than did the late Steve McQueen who, in a bullet-headed way, he somewhat resembled. The interesting news was McDonald's bride, thirty years his junior, a blonde with a Huckleberry Finn face above scissoring legs.

"Can you tell me where the bathroom is?" she asked. "I'd kind of like to freshen up."

She was a glossy, spirited horse. McDonald and his animal bride slept for fifteen hours and breakfasted on black coffee. McDonald, so affable the night before, was morose, as if he were living patiently for the hour of the day when it would be decent to take a drink, as if Cosgrove were extremely lucky to have him as his guest.

"Where's the dishwasher?"

"There isn't one", Cosgrove told him. "Or rather, it's you. Think of this, if you like, as a very well equipped summer cabin."

Cosgrove took them sightseeing.

"What's 'Georgian'?" McDonald asked.

"Who's Wilt Chamberlain?" Cosgrove asked.

"He's a stork like me", McDonald told him, amused for the first time that day. The honeymooners giggled together, created an American island in the midst of northern Europe. There's no doubt about it, Cosgrove thought, who had had a fiancée of his own, also younger than himself, until recently: he's stolen my luck.

In America Cosgrove wrote to McDonald about the man's affectation of a car that was twenty years old, with a top speed of 30, in desperate need of a new starter motor. He wrote to an address in Venice where the McDonalds were spending time before the British term began: "Second gear pops continually out of place —quite terrifying on the freeway. I nursed your car to Hermosa Beach the other day and it needed two quarts of oil immediately on arrival." Either McDonald never got the letter or chose to pretend he hadn't.

Cosgrove had flown to California from Heathrow. Drinks came in cans with a pull-tab which did not detach.

"You never seen these things before?" his seat-companion asked. "We have 'em all the time in the States. Let me show you."

Travel had made him a child again. The steward performed a dumb show to a tape demonstrating the use of a life-jacket. The Boeing 747 followed the sun, flying from midday to midday. At the Los Angeles airport, dogs in green coats sniffed Cosgrove's luggage for drugs and he bought a bus ticket from an extremely elderly woman who spoke to him on a microphone from within a bullet-proof box. The bus drove along an interminable freeway. There was nothing to see but a brown anonymity of bungalows and factories.

"You've got a right to be pooped", the first Mrs McDonald told Cosgrove when she collected him from another airport where the bus dropped him. "I'm glad to do you the favour, though God knows why I should do Gene any. There's a favour you could do me if you wouldn't mind. Can I still do my washing at your place? What with the cost and all it sure would help. How do you like the heat out here? It's been in the low nineties ever since the Games started. Those poor athletes. I sure pity those guys."

McDONALD'S HOUSE had exaggerated eaves of wooden shingle and a dovecote effect in the main gable. It was one of similar houses in the prosperous Dewey Heights development over which a mid-afternoon hush lingered like the echo of a bell. The sprinkled grass seemed never to have been stepped upon. Inside the screen door and the front door Cosgrove breathed hot, curtained air. There was a kitchen on his left separated from the living-room by a bar counter. Re-entering with some of his luggage, he

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found Mrs McDonald in a narrow passage off the kitchen, filling a washing-machine.

"Gene said there was a swimming-pool."

"It's out the back." There was a door and Cosgrove tried to squeeze past her, his loins inadvertently grinding into her wide buttocks. Later, to Jimmy Quinlan, he blamed it all on jet lag. The McDonald woman wheeled round in the confined area, spinning Cosgrove in the other direction, and hit him such a blow he thought she had blinded him.

"Hey, Mister, whatcha think you're doing?"

"My glasses!" Cosgrove, a gasping fish in the watery world of his astigmatism, scrabbled at Mrs McDonald's feet. She joined him on the floor to look. "You're kneeling on them", he bleated.

"Are they all right?"

"No, damn it", Cosgrove blubbered through his cut lips. "They're scratched. I'll never afford to have them replaced out here!"

"What's wrong with your mouth?"

"I think I've chipped a tooth. Or rather, you have." The woman was wearing heavy rings on her fingers. Rocks. About her neck she wore a sun-ray construction of porcupine quills. She was a walking armoury, more so than he knew because she later showed him a canister of Mace she carried and when he asked her if she had ever used it she said, "No, but I'm dying to have the chance".

All she said now was, "A girl can't be too careful."

Cosgrove, to his greater distress, wept afresh. "I only wanted to see the pool!"

"Call me Maura", she said and produced a tumbler of iced-water from a gadget in the front of a huge cabinet.

"What on earth . . ?" he asked as the glass, a source of prisms, winked through the room.

"It makes ice-cubes too", she told him. Pressing another tumbler to a second trigger in the cabinet's recesses caused a churning and the clonk of ice-cubes falling into the glass. "We never had anything like this back east. Never needed it, I guess. Oh, this kitchen has everything—garbage disposal, dishwasher, crockpot, all twenty years old. Gene never replaced anything. He just bought more stocks. You can't use the pool. It wouldn't be safe. Gene hasn't paid the pool man in weeks. *He* wasn't going to be here to use it. Gene and I, we got divorced two years ago but I think Gene planned for the marriage to break up a couple of years before that. You know what he said when we got married? He said, 'You have till you're forty'. You know something? He was right. Round about there things started to go wrong."

"It's a shame about the pool. That's why I came here."

"Guess you'll have to take up jogging instead."

"How bad is my tooth?"

"You'll live. You going to sue me?"

"No, of course not. Ought I?"

"You wouldn't get much. Mama kiss it better?"

Was he supposed to call her bluff? She was a lively old girl. Trapped by her own joke, Maura McDonald briefly brushed his lips with her own.

"You English", she said as if the exotic nature of his foreignness explained her own lapse. "I sure hope no one saw us through that window. Look, I'm really sorry about your tooth and all. I guess I over-reacted, right?"

COSGROVE HAD TAKEN up jogging just before he left England, pounding around the local golf course, which was something he could not do here as the San Carlos golf course, opposite a line of eating places—Taco Bell, Winchell's Do-Nuts, Bob's Big Boy—was behind a high wire fence and for golfers only. Instead he ran through the Dewey Heights development every evening, through the rainbows of the sprinklers, wondering where there could possibly be a rise in the ground to justify the development's name. Old people in couples, presumably not the ones who fell over in Food King and Luckie's and caused a sirened rush of paramedics, marched briskly in track suits, obedient to a particular regimen of diet and exercise. Alsatian dogs patrolled his neighbours' yards but Cosgrove never saw them taken for walks. He never saw his neighbours at all. The weather was unvarying tropical heat. The radio told Cosgrove that the overnight low in the high seventies would hit an expected high in the high eighties/low nineties, and the falsetto voice of a haemorrhoid sufferer would hymn the praises of a brand of suppositories with the jingle, "I'm a believer in the ready reliever!"

Quinlan, his office-mate, took Cosgrove out drinking, the first time to a singles bar called Panama Joe's. Quinlan got off with a divorcée who wrote poems, one of them, lyrical, dedicated to a youth who had assaulted her. Her friend, with whom Cosgrove had no luck, was getting over a long affair with a heart surgeon and eventually drove herself home, alone, in tears. Maura McDonald agreed to drive Cosgrove to the Huntington and the Getty Museum, places as new to Maura as they were to Cosgrove: the Turners and Corots, though, were familiar enough to make him homesick. The semester began and Cosgrove was publicly introduced, rising and bowing, at meetings of convocation, the School of Humanities, and his own department. Quinlan was driving him home from a bar called the Honeybucket when he sent his Toyota wagon into the back of a mauve Cadillac De Ville, a preposterous barge of a car driven by someone who might have been Vietnamese.

Quinlan never stopped. He took the San Carlos off-ramp at speed and they careered through the development making the brakes howl. Falling from the ticking car they listened in the silence for the reverberation of a police helicopter at palm tree height but all they could

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hear was the seashell roar of the San Diego freeway. Not one of the guard dogs barked. Standing there, Cosgrove shivered in the warm night, especially aware of the lurking disaster he now realised was his primary feeling about America. The emptiness which served their purposes now, the mice in the beds of ivy, the rats in the storm drains were like harbingers of a restoration to desert. Overhead the sky was filled with the moving, winking red and white dots of light aircraft, points of cruising isolation.

Inside, knocking over Maura's vase embossed with the legend "Love is holding on with both hands open", Quinlan helped himself to Cosgrove's bottle of generic tequila.

"Why didn't we stop? You've got insurance."

"Sure, but a guy with a car like that, he worships it. And then he could get a whiplash case against me. I could be years getting out from under that. And we're bombed, so how would that look?"

"Talking of cops, I've never seen any. Someone shot the Baskin-Robbins manager but I'm not aware he was ever caught."

"Basically what you have here is a low crime area", Quinlan said. "You want crime, you have to go to the *barrios* of east Los Angeles. Kids get stolen there. Johnny goes to the toilet, he never comes back. Babies get stolen. Mother's sightseeing on Olvera Street and she looks the other way, looks back again, and the stroller's empty. Nice white baby gets a high price. Older kids get to work the brothels."

"Here? In California?"

"Hell, no", Quinlan growled, dipping his bearded head for another swallow of the tequila. "South of the border. If it isn't brothels then they turn up years later on remote farms with just enough English to say 'I'm a gringo, take me home'." Quinlan gazed about the kitchen where they sat and caught sight of the bulletin-board where an Irish Farewell was tacked: "May the wind be always at your back, may the road you're taking always take you home. . . ."

"Tell me", Quinlan asked. "You serious about marrying Maura? You really going to do it?"

"Looks like that. Actually, it's her idea more than mine. She's very respectable. We can never use this place because of what people would say."

"Motels come expensive."

"Well, uh, Maura pays mostly. I've retained my British salary and the pound's dropped yet again. When McDonald sells this place we could be fairly comfortable."

"You going to stay here? Not go back to England?"

"I think we might", Cosgrove said, separating a Lipton's tea-bag from its envelope. "There's not a lot for me to go back to. If I stayed here, finished my book, who knows? Maybe I could have an American career. It's a matter of seizing the main chance."

"Maura's a nice lady. I haven't seen her in years. Used to sing songs from *Camelot* together." Cosgrove made himself a cup of tea and Quinlan took a further pull at the tumbler of tequila. "I never married any of my wives without I was in love with them."

"Oh, I am", Cosgrove told him.

IT WAS NINE in the morning when Quinlan drove home to Seal Beach. He drove down Main Street past the shop that sold parrots, the liquor-deli, Clancey's. Brown teenagers surfed their way to the beach on skateboards and Quinlan reflected that his wife would assume he'd been screwing around, but when he approached the ground-floor apartment which, given the alimony he had to pay his previous wives, was all he could afford, he forgot about Robyn in his shock at seeing a mauve Cadillac De Ville parked outside. Quinlan drove around the block, angle-parked on Main Street, and walked back to his home through the alleys so he could reach it by the rear. The living-room which became a bedroom was L-shaped and from the back window he could see most of the room. Inside was Robyn and with her, no mistake about it, was the Oriental, Vietnamese, Japanese, whatever, the driver of the Caddy. The man was lithe and energetic and although whatever he was making with his hands was something small, his actions with arm and elbow were large and fluid. He wore a gleaming white shirt and was working with white paper which became a white bird.

"Jesus", Quinlan moaned, watching and hiking up his Levis. His wife's visitor made the origami bird flap its wings and Robyn laughed, her lovely head thrown back, her throat a gift to the smiling man. Quinlan walked thoughtfully back to Main Street where he went to Happy's Hacienda for enchiladas.

"We got pumpkin pie for Hallowe'en, Mr Quinlan", the waitress said.

"Just coffee", Quinlan told her. When it came he swallowed three Exedrin with it, still thoughtful.

THANKSGIVING follows Hallowe'en and is normally a family occasion, but Maura had quarrelled with her daughters over her extraordinary decision to marry an Englishman no one knew anything about and who was more than ten years her junior. The eldest daughter drove down from Simi Valley to find out if her mother was serious, and she was unimpressed when Maura compared herself to Joan Collins. They had dinner together in the Old Spaghetti Factory in Newport Beach, sitting in the intimacy of the tramcar which formed part of the décor.

"Joan Collins is going to marry a younger man. That's what the *National Examiner* says."

"I know what the *National Examiner* says. It says things like 'Psychic bond with dead dad guarantees Loni will be Burt's bride'. Since when have we lived our lives by what the *National Examiner* says?"

"Don't knock psychic, Bonnie!"

"I'm not getting into that with you, Mother. Is your

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Englishman psychic too? Joan Collins can marry younger men, but you're not Joan Collins."

"You're damn right I'm not. I'm a year younger than she is."

"Mother, you're a couple of pounds heavier too!"

"Bonnie, have you driven so far to be so rude?"

"It's gross", the daughter said. "What'll Dad think?"

"I don't give a damn what Dad thinks."

Maura had told Cosgrove it was not the moment for him to meet Bonnie, and he was at home watching television until it should be dark enough to do what he had decided ought to be done. He watched the now matronly Shirley Jones urge viewers to "discover Ralph's lower prices". The big sell for Christmas was already under way:

> *I don't want to grow up because if I did*
> *I couldn't be a Toys-R-Us kid!*

Between the advertisements were programmes on child abuse (a lot of people at it), Alzheimer's disease (prevalent), and *Life Styles of the Rich and Famous*, which had nothing satirical about it although introduced by a compatriot, one with an Essex accent. After he had been led through the palace of a former *Playboy* centrefold and had watched a commercial of John Houseman weighing tomatoes in rival brands of salad oil, Cosgrove decided it was dark enough to get to work. He changed into swimming trunks and went around to the side of the house where ladders, along with the pool's complement of nets and poles, were kept. Among the jumble he found two painter's planks and carried them to the shallow end of the pool. The moon and the patiently shifting aircraft lights prowled the pool's curved floor, the water invisible. Cosgrove switched on the underwater light and despite the debris on the surface—fronds, lizards, leaves—the pool became a blue jewel. He dropped the planks in, starting volumes of shocked geometries in the light. He went back and fetched bricks. Once he was satisfied with the arrangement of the two planks and the bricks, he fetched a spade and dug up the gateposts at the other side of the house. Cosgrove calculated he needed a new width of about six feet. Something chattered in a tree above, throwing nuts down at him, but Cosgrove was otherwise undisturbed.

"WHERE'S GENE'S wonderful car, lover?" Maura asked Cosgrove next day. Maura was waiting for him as arranged in the parking lot of the Forty Niner, having decided in her paranoid way that it was more discreet than meeting him at college or her erstwhile matrimonial home. They both had Friday off for the Thanksgiving weekend and were going to attempt their most ambitious trip. They would spend Thanksgiving in the desert at Borrego Springs. Cosgrove put his suitcase in the back of Maura's Mercury Capri and got in next to her. He kissed her, still unable to throw off the sense that it was not unlike kissing his mother.

"I'll tell you later. I got a lift from Jimmy Quinlan."

"That bum. Let me tell you, Gene never touched hard liquor till he started hanging out with Jimmy Quinlan."

"When I met Gene he wouldn't look at a whisky. He just drank bottles and bottles of white wine."

"That's because he's got ulcers but he won't admit it, just like he won't ever apologise." Their relationship flourished on a mutual vilification of Gene McDonald. Maura took the San Gabriel freeway to connect with Interstate 15.

"Everything had to be logical", she explained. "Just the way *he* saw things. He hated me being innarested in psychic because it didn't fit his frame. 'What are you innarested in psychic for?' he would say. 'I've told you it's baloney.' Another thing he said. When we got married he said, 'If we ever quarrel it'll be your fault.' And he meant it. He could never be wrong."

By midday they were travelling on much smaller roads, climbing all the time, the road circling great slews of boulders, the tumbled refuse of a torrent or an ocean from another age. They passed hamlets of mobile homes, the wheels decently skirted.

"Gene liked films", Cosgrove offered. "Said his favourite was *Shane*."

"That figures. The homesteaders are all stumblebums. Shane has to help 'em out."

"But surely the thing about Shane is he plays fair. He wouldn't, I suppose, sell a man a crippled horse but Gene's quite ready to lumber me with his joke of a Falcon."

"That's the difference. Shane never got Jean Arthur but old Gene's a survivor: he wanted his Italian honeymoon with a Barbie doll and he got it—at your expense, I guess. Fix you up with a good car and he might not have had the dough."

When the road descended it was around mountains of bare granite. Borrego Springs was below them on the perfect horizontal of the desert, on a road as straight as a surveyor's ruler. Cosgrove and Maura booked into a motel called The Oasis, showered separately, made love together, showered separately again, their towels, steam, moans and giggles stamping the room as their own, although when they had entered it the bedroom with *en suite* bathroom had been dedicated to the minimal requirements of any pair of human beings. Outside, a plastic gnome, surplus to requirements and a concession to fancy, fished a half-moon of ornamental water. Cosgrove and Maura had supper in a pizza parlour attached to a dark bar on the main road through town.

"Out here in the sticks you'd think it was still the '60s", Cosgrove said. "Everyone looks like Quinlan." He meant the proprietor, who had been able to dig up a bottle of Pinot Noir for him, and the proprietor's friends who were watching football on the television in the bar, all bushed in ragged grey beards. Maura was drinking her usual dry martini. Cosgrove had per-

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formed splendidly with Maura in the motel room because her corded neck and tobacco-charged gasps had been a useful brake on the urgency of his desires.

"You're pretty good yourself", he had told Maura, and it was true. Her years with McDonald had left her expert at games, tricks, little dexterities with which to tempt the man from bridge-, pool- and beer-table. Cosgrove could understand how, having perfected such skills, it must have irked to leave them unexercised for so long. He should have been contented. Instead:

"I bet you'd prefer one of the El Paso cantinas or that place at Huntington Beach, Maxwell's? Or how about the Jolly Roger at Seaport Village?"

"Parker's Lighthouse is good."

"Don't forget the Red Onion at Peter's Landing with the pink Margaritas."

"Yeah, that's nice."

"But all those places are invented, manufactured", Cosgrove triumphed. "No pirates carouse in the Jolly Roger and no one actually sleeps at Seaport Village. No ship ever docked at Ports O'Call. An ad man and an accountant dreamed them all up."

Maura wore a russet suit with large buttons and her hair was tossed in the inky, face-framing curls lately affected by Elizabeth Taylor. Cosgrove found himself recalling the hibiscus bush of one of her stories: she had admired the hibiscus flowers in the morning and that afternoon Gene organised the girls to cut the bush down.

"I bet you got some great restaurants in England", she soothed. "You'll have to show me."

"Somehow I can't imagine you in England", Cosgrove said. "I can't imagine anyone over there who says 'innarested'."

"Aw honey, what are you sore about? Have I said something I shouldn't have said?"

"No, it's me, I'm sorry. Let's finish here and see the town. We could visit the Road Runners Club."

"Would that be fun?"

"I doubt it. The receptionist said it's a tract of mobile homes for the elderly. We passed it when we overshot the motel."

"I thought you wanted to come here", Maura pleaded. "You wanted to see the desert."

"I do, I do", Cosgrove said. They planned to marry at Christmas.

THAT NIGHT, rain battered the desert town like fists. Nothing personal but it meant to wash away the painted plywood signs, the shopfront verandas of warped planks, the optimistic palm trees. The rain woke Maura and she got out of bed and retied the ribbons of her coffee-coloured négligé to watch the diagonal slant of the rain in the light of Reception across the gravel. She took a pill and was asleep when Cosgrove woke. Not sure if he was part of a dream, she heard him say, "I'm going jogging. Won't be more than an hour."

Cosgrove took a road at right angles to the one that ran through the town. The rain in the night had cut innumerable gullies in the red sand and Cosgrove relished the scene, created overnight as if for his amusement. The desert was anything but barren or colourless. From studying a guidebook he could identify the tall black spears of ocotillo, the tufted javelins of agave, the silver brittle bushes, and the cholla with the rising sun behind it luminous in its millions of needles. The sand, red at the roadside where the tendrils of calabazilla extended their pygmy skulls, changed to a pale orange in the distance where the Laguna Mountains rose suddenly from the level expanse of sand, boulder and cactus. Cosgrove felt he was running better than ever in the freshened air of the storm's aftermath, the light broadening as he ran, the sun lifting higher over the mountains which still contained pockets of the blackest night in their folds. After the dusty emptiness of the coast Cosgrove felt renewed in the desert, and hardly noticed the only car of the morning stop in front of him.

"You wan' a lift?" the driver called.

Cosgrove was now some distance from the town. Two more men, dark brown faces, black hair, got out of the back of the sun-blistered Chevrolet, and it seemed too late to make a dash into the desert which in any case was probably alive with rattlesnakes. The T-shirt of one of the men read "Elton John at Irving Meadows", but nothing else about the men seemed reassuring. Cosgrove gazed stupidly at their baseball caps of woven nylon. Each cap had an oval hole at the back and a pimpled tongue so that the owner could adjust the size. Tufts of the men's black hair jutted through the holes.

"What do you want?" Cosgrove asked, his mouth dry.

The men hit Cosgrove a couple of times, winded him, and stuffed him into the back of the car. Cosgrove shouted and fought in the well between the seats but the men subdued him with kicks and, keeping him in the well, managed to get a rag tied through his mouth. At the roadside, among the calabazilla tendrils, Cosgrove's spectacles stared relentlessly at the bright blue sky.

It fell to Quinlan to handle the correspondence concerning Cosgrove's disappearance. That morning Maura searched the roads Cosgrove might have taken, waited that day and the following night. She knew she should go to the police, knew it with every Peter Stuyvesant she smoked as she paced the motel room, but how would it look if she explained to some large-bellied duty cop that the much younger man she had shared a motel room with, to whom she was not married, had disappeared? She would look so cheap. She would look deserted. The man might laugh. She wished, stamping her shoe with the twin white straps, that Gene were here: he usually solved all these prob-

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lems, and then she was angry with herself, remembering that if Gene were here she would not have the problem.

Next morning, on the Sunday, Maura checked out of The Oasis and, avoiding the mountains, drove due east to Salton Sea, taking 86 to where it hit Interstate 10 going west. The rain came on again, falling so hard that the cars in front of her were outlined in haloes of rebounding drops. She drove straight to Quinlan's apartment, but he was celebrating Thanksgiving with a former wife, their family and her lover in Costa Mesa. She returned several times and finally waited him out and talked to him for the first time in five years.

"There's no way you're going to keep this from the police, Maura", he growled at her. "I'll come with you."

Quinlan wrote first to McDonald so that Gene should be spared as much embarrassment as possible if the affair became known more widely. He concluded the letter with the sure palliative of sport and his own news: "A lot of interest in the LA Clippers and the Lakers are playing .500 exhibition ball but the Kings are winless in their first five games. I guess my troubles pale next to all this about Maura and your Englishman but Robyn is now shacked up with the Japanese I rear-ended at Bellflower and Willow. I'm feeling no pain as I'm seeing that graduate student, Rosetta. . . ."

"*¿Quién es ese*?" Cosgrove heard one of them ask.

"*Diceu que las ingleses no serán nunca esclavos*", another said.

It meant nothing to Cosgrove. How long he travelled was just as hard for him to tell, as he was often forced into the boot. In the heat and the darkness a couple of hours could seem like a day. He was fed hamburgers but well away from wherever they had been purchased. The men argued, some for letting him go, others, not always the same ones, for keeping him or so he suspected. Once the older one asked, "You have friends?" and wrote down addresses, but when they stopped again, this time in an alley of flattened clay between caravans, it was so that he could be shown to fresh people, who nodded their heads in agreement, and Cosgrove travelled on in a different but equally battered car. When he changed hands for a third time and was shown in pantomime, punctuated by blows, that he was to help some Indians dig a long trench, Cosgrove suspected he was not, after all, to be ransomed, and in those intervals when he was not too tired and hungry to think of anything he reflected that it was all right, that he did not care. His life had been over long before this. Whatever he had valued from his previous life, the nervous grass of an English heath, grey ecclesiastic stone rising like a shout, the smell of leather in a college library, would live as richly in his memory as anywhere else. In the meantime there was the joy of the warm, metallic water from the bucket when it was his turn to drink and the fascinating texture of the succotash on which the captives and their bosses both subsisted. Phrases from English poetry sometimes surfaced in his mind:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou amongst the leaves hast never known. . . .

It must be still out there, "the fever, and the fret", the cars moving as a solid wall on the freeways, their drivers scheming for promotion or the big deal, the car radios reporting the sportsmen overtaking, losing, winning, but it faded next to a concern for his loosening teeth or the study of an insect on his blackened fingernail. Only early in his misadventure did he think of Maura and then with relief that he would never have to tell her he had dismantled the yard gate of the Dewey Heights house, so as to drive through the fence to park McDonald's appalling Falcon securely on the algae-covered floor of McDonald's unusable swimming-pool.

Visiting

Those houses are too square, those roads too straight,
And the trees, though old, look planted to conceal
Some sheltered institution—hospital
Or army base? We find the visitors' gate:
A car-park conifered as a cemetery,
Well-ordered, clean. You'd know it miles away

Now, like all guilty secrets, it unmasks
Its human face: a shabby hall set out
With coffee, tea, as for a village fête;
Familiar transactions, social tasks
In a world removed from all we could transact;
And people round us trying to connect
The outside past—"Do you remember?"—to this,
The present, inside. Lives have raced ahead
On different tracks, with so much left unsaid,
And now unsayable, that we dismiss
The normal words: gossip, solemnity
Seem to affront the occasion equally.

"It won't be long." The parting sounds inane.
"We'd better let you out", the warders smile:
The trees, of course, were planted to console.
They fail. The landscape opens once again—
A low green wood, shut pubs, a water tower—
And freedom, if that is what this is, tastes sour.

Neil Powell

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Perestroika without Glasnost?

The Chinese Heresy

Letter from Peking—By JONATHAN MIRSKY

中國

MARXISM-LENINISM is becoming irrelevant in China, and the Communist Party knows it. As the country edges into "the Year of the Dragon", still piloted from just off-stage by the 83-year-old Deng Xiaoping—"senior leader and chief architect of our new policies", despite his recent retirement from the Standing Committee, the Politburo, and even the Central Committee—its leaders' insistence that only the Party can set the future course sounds increasingly desperate.

Chinese who long for genuine democracy—dismissed by the Party as "so-called Great Democracy" or "bourgeois liberalisation"—persist in asking me why Westerners, who regularly condemn the absence of liberty in the Soviet Union, and call for the recognition of human rights there as a condition of real *détente*, fail to hold China to the same standards. It has been many years since Russians suffered the persecution and detention which millions of Chinese did until Mao's death in 1976 or more recently (as Amnesty International has repeatedly shown), nor have Russians been tortured and publicly shot in the same numbers as the "hooligans and counter-revolutionaries" in the hands of the Chinese Bureau of Public Security.

The reasons for the lower standard, as I try to suggest to Chinese friends, lie first in our cultural ignorance and condescension. Westerners expect the Chinese to be cruel in some peculiarly Oriental way, and because they have never heard the names of any Chinese intellectuals they feel nothing when the Party torments them. There is an additional explanation for Western silence on Chinese outrages. As China becomes more capitalist, as is imagined to be the case, and thus more "open", the assumption follows that the inevitably-emerging Western liberties must not be endangered by impatient calls for genuine freedom.

The Chinese know how limited is the new relaxation. Not long ago Deng Xiaoping told a group of young reformers that official visitors from Poland had warned him of the dangers of accompanying economic change with political tolerance. Poland, Deng told his audience, provides China with a negative lesson in what happens if economic reforms are not accompanied by tight political discipline. There are two reasons for this, he observed: without the tight discipline, political conservatives will charge the Party with losing its grip, and "bourgeois liberals" will make increasingly outrageous demands. One of the Dengists' main threats is that the economic progress for which Chinese long will be impossible unless the Party retains overall control, especially in the realm of ideology.

Whatever intellectual relaxation has occurred in China has been grudgingly granted by the Party on the grounds that this will be good for modernisation and production. Democracy and liberty are never acknowledged as good in themselves, nor is law ever described as (among other things) the citizen's greatest bulwark against the iniquities of the State. Chinese leaders have proclaimed repeatedly and explicitly that economic reform will not weaken the primacy of the Party or the need for obedience to its commands. It is Chinese intellectuals who bravely ask why the Party should retain its unique role as the arbiter of China's future. Because of its glorious past? its clear vision of the future? its self-described unique capacity for self-correction?

The Party is concerned to hold on to its "unique role". The day after Christmas, Gao Yang, President of the Central Party School, announced that:

> ". . . about 20,000 high and middle-ranked political leaders in China are to be sent back to school over the next five years to bone up on their Marxist theory. . . . The school will focus on problems emerging in China's economic construction and reforms, and try to find answers based on Marxist principles."

The operative word is "try". But even trying is going to be hard in the face of the problems confronting the Party, founded in 1921, which many Chinese now say, with astonishing openness, is responsible for decades of poverty and

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backwardness. The first problem is the Party's role: its own agenda for the next century appears to make it redundant, apart from somewhat desperate statements from the leadership that it is indispensable. More fatal yet is the Party's growing reputation for corruption, the inevitable concomitant of its commitment in principle to profit, "entrepreneurialism", and market forces.

ALTHOUGH THE EVIDENCE for this rapidly fading charisma is abundant, not least in the informal remarks of Chinese both at home and abroad, the keynote speech (of 25 October 1987) to the 13th Party Congress by then Premier and now Party General-Secretary Zhao Ziyang contains the authoritative data. Zhao described a desperately poor country, and set forth a programme for the future—which he admitted just before the Congress, to a visiting British Cabinet Minister, was merely a way of fending off questions about whether the country was "going capitalist".

The text of his address amounted to 59 pages, and it took two-and-a-half hours to read out to the delegates. Zhao devoted less than five pages to the kind of vainglory so common in major statements in the People's Democracies. After a mini-peroration on p. 5—"Comrades! Nine years of practice have proved that our Party is truly a great, glorious, and correct party . . . and that this line is a crystallisation of the wisdom of the Party and the people, and of the collective wisdom of the Central Committee", etc.—Deng's closest associate and (for now, at least) his heir, wasted little time in laying out for his comrades a bleak picture of China since Liberation in 1949. China's GNP, he said:

> ". . . still ranks among the lowest in the world. Out of a population of more than one billion, over 700 million people live in rural areas and for the most part still use hand tools for a living . . . many industries are several decades or even a century behind present-day standards . . . vast areas are underdeveloped and impoverished . . . the scientific and technological level as a whole is low and nearly one-quarter of the population is still illiterate or semi-literate. . . ."

For too long, Zhao admitted, "Left thinking"—the Party's code phrase for mindless Maoism—had dominated policy, with production in second place to "taking class struggle as the key link . . . and an undue emphasis on a single form of ownership".

NONE OF THIS was new to the 1,900 delegates. Even though most of them live surrounded by the *tequan*, "special privileges", of Party membership, they know (and have heard it admitted for many years) that China is very poor and that Party mistakes and even "tragic errors" have kept it that way.

What the 1,900 wanted was "the Line" for the future. This is what they must cling to, espouse, and justify . . . unless it is abandoned—when like so many previous "Party Lines"—it will be vigorously repudiated.

Zhao gave them what they needed: "China is now in the initial stage of socialism."

This is a convenient ideological catch-all. It was devised in the 1970s by Su Shaozhi, director of the "Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought Institute" and one of China's leading political theorists, who is on a first-name basis with professors at Harvard, Michigan, and London. Only last September, at Deng Xiaoping's personal command, Su was sacked from his Institute and invited to leave the Party (he declined) for advocating free elections and calling on the Party once too often to abandon its Stalinist custom of crushing critics.

But long before Su's semi-purge, Zhao Ziyang's think-tankers had picked up his "initial stage" theory and made it the Party's centre-piece for the October Congress. According to the theory, China never passed through "the capitalist stage" and is entering into socialism poor and backward. It is too late to return to capitalism, which in any event is tainted with contradictions and immorality. But over the next century—for one of the characteristics of the "initial stage" is its great length—many modernising policies will be necessary to build production. Some of these will closely resemble "capitalist policies": bond markets, various forms of ownership (some of them virtually private), and different modes of investment, including joint ventures with foreigners. During this period, too, the Party will withdraw from administration, to concentrate on grand policy. "All the reforms we have carried out", Zhao stated, "conduce to the development of the socialist economy. . . ."

THIS IS NEITHER a sophisticated nor even a very convincing socialist theory. But it is intended to meet a gigantic need—namely, to stop critics of the reforms from claiming that they fail the ultimate test: they are "not socialist". One of Zhao's young economic researchers privately described the initial stage theory for me as "something like a child's game, very easy to understand, although real life is much more complicated. . . ."

It is indeed. Just as very few Chinese leaders are wholly opposed to the reforms, most Dengists recognise the problems the reforms have thrown up. Broadly speaking, rural policies, based on entrepreneurial drive and the demands of the Market, have been successful. Chinese peasants, after all, have had thousands of years of experience, and needed little more than the relaxation of Party controls to increase production. But in urban enterprises, which have developed relatively little in China since the late 19th century, the Party's stepping-back may have provoked as many problems as it solved: loss of foreign exchange; helter-skelter planning and heavy demands on raw materials and transportation; low quality; and corruption.

It was not necessary to lurk on the conservative edge of the Party during the last three years to notice the results of an overheated economy just as the Congress was about to break into praise for eight years of reform. Some long-range reforms, indeed, have been delayed or set aside, as once again (in the Chinese phrase) "the facts teach hard lessons".

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By June of 1987 it was apparent from all the usual indicators that industrial output, wages, and certain forms of credit and investment were escaping central control. A 50% rise in money supply, galloping inflation (running at perhaps 20% for city dwellers), and an expanding state deficit (expected to exceed $2.1 billion) worried the leadership and explain the cautious realism of Zhao's keynote address to the Congress. By August, with the Congress less than two months away, price ceilings reappeared on many items—a step back from the promised "new prices", which float and are supposed to be a central element in economic reform. It is significant that the new controls emerged from a high-level meeting led by Acting Premier Li Peng and Yao Yilin, both newly elevated to the Standing Committee where they are said to be the voices of "economic caution".

Of course, such setbacks become ideological issues as well. There exist old comrades of the same revolutionary generation of Deng Xiaoping, with as passionate a commitment to Chinese wealth and power, for whom the Dengist programme appears "un-Marxist", overly materialistic, and economically unsound, to the point of risking runaway inflation and even famine.

Chen Yun is such a man. As old if not older than Deng, with a much longer career on both the Central Committee and the Politburo, Chen left the Standing Committee in November, apparently on the condition that Deng leave at the same time. China's most famous economic strategist, responsible for the first Five-Year Plans (on which he had been assisted by Yao Yilin, who has just ascended to the Standing Committee, probably at Chen's urging), Chen is famous for directly opposing Mao's "Great Leap" visions in the late 1950s, for which he endured the Chairman's displeasure. In September 1985 Chen staggered a Party meeting, where reform was to be hailed as a great success, by drawing attention to its costs in foreign-exchange drain, corruption, and a lack of central direction which was already leading to declining grain harvests. Such crises, Chen reminded his comrades, could result in hunger and "social disorder".

Chen's warning provoked some cooling-off policies. When these were suspended in early 1986, unplanned expansion reappeared, producing the gloomy statistics in the current *Statistical Reports*. These include a 19.6% food-price rise in the last six months, with grain alone up by over 46%. Despite these figures, which infuriate urban Chinese whose incomes, unlike those of peasants, are fixed, Zhao's 25 October speech foresaw a market-dominated price system. Still, at a news conference during the Congress, spokesmen declined to say when such price deregulation would begin, and Zhao has since conceded that it will be delayed. Without it the reforms can hardly succeed; with it urban dislike of reform mounts.

China's New Rich: Waste Amidst Poverty

Peking

CHINA *is failing to produce enough food for its growing population, but at the same time a rising passion for "conspicuous consumption" of everything from rice to refrigerators means that much of what it does produce is wasted. Official figures show that grain output for 1987 fell short of its target by five million tonnes and grain imports were double the 1986 figure.*

He Kang, Agriculture Minister, said that arable land was diminishing annually by 1.3 million acres while the population, already more than 1,000 million, was rising by more than 10 million a year.

There have been open admissions of problems in providing enough food and clothing for people in some areas, where millions live in poverty.

HOWEVER, **there are many whose incomes have soared as a result of the liberal economic reforms of the past ten years.**

Since there is no way to save money while earning interest to keep up with rising inflation, and little chance of buying a house, the newly rich display their wealth by spending on consumer goods and food.

"I don't even like make-up", said one woman as she asked the assistant at the cosmetics counter in a Peking department store for the most expensive of the limited number of items on show. "But you have to wear it these days, and besides, what's money for?"

BUYING *more than one needs, or even wants, has become obligatory in some circles, says one Chinese entrepreneur.*

"People have huge, double-door refrigerators in their living rooms just for show. They may have nothing at all inside the refrigerator. But they still have to have it, because it's the new thing."

Another Chinese said:

"The fashion now is to order far more food than you need. A host who provides just the right amount will be looked down on as too poor to afford more."

The formal Chinese banquet, such as is served at weddings, illustrates unrestrained consumption and unashamed waste at their highest levels. Luxuries such as Peking duck, abalone and shark's fin soup, at £100 a tureen, feature in a succession of dishes, some of which are merely picked at.

A RECENT SURVEY **suggested that most couples in Shanghai were spending three times the average annual salary on their wedding parties. The official media have accused young people of competing to see who can have the most extravagant celebrations.**

The official *People's Daily* confesses: "People would rather starve than lose face."

LI PENG, *the acting Premier, told Government leaders in a New Year message to set an example by practising hard work, thrift and economy, and by avoiding extravagance. In the words of a professor at a Communist Party school:*

"The crucial question now is whether we can rationalise what we consume to suit our basic national conditions, which are those of a poor country."

Tim Luard

in the DAILY TELEGRAPH (*London*)

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No less fundamental than prices, both ideologically and for the future of the reforms, are the issues of ownership and state planning. Who owns the land—and all other "means of production"—used to be a simple enough Marxist question. The invariable answer was "the People"—which meant the State. But peasants, it was finally admitted, saw no reason to work flat out for results which never enriched them. Even Deng's 1979 "Rural Responsibility System", which permitted farmers to plan their own production and keep much of the profit, retained at its ideological centre the ideal that in 15 to 30 years paddies, fields, orchards, and ponds, regardless of how individual families had invested in them, could be reclaimed and redistributed. But tens of thousands of small holdings made for obvious inefficiency, and peasants began illegally to lease and even sell their land to more ambitious or efficient neighbours, while they went off to work in rural factories or services.

Now this will be regularised. During the Congress a spokesman for the Party Secretariat, Du Runsheng, declared that from now on farmers would be permitted to lease State-contracted land to others. Du insisted that he was referring not to ownership but to "usage", and emphasised that steps would be taken to prevent the emergence of "large land-holders", a reminder of the pre-Communist past. But Chinese experts in Peking acknowledged that this would be hard to attain: 400,000 hectares are being lost from cultivation annually as peasants abandon their holdings for other work. As this land comes into the hands of entrepreneurs, there are already reports of up to 100 agricultural labourers working on very large tracts. A Congress spokesman rather lamely insisted that "in socialist China" such labourers could never be "exploited".

WHAT SOME traditionally-minded revolutionaries—particularly those in the Chen Yun camp—will see as the ultimate sell-out came from Zhao Ziyang himself. During the week of the Congress, in a well-reported conversation with the Director-General of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), Arthur Dunkel, Zhao revealed that within three years only 30% of China's economy will be controlled by the state. Nine years ago, he told his guest, control was total.

According to Zhao, the plan is to increase the share of the economy subject to market forces until the extent of state planning is "only a very small proportion". The Party's *People's Daily* promptly observed that China needs to compress the long experience of industrialised countries into a short term if the country is to reach the Dengist goal of modernisation within 75 years. New economic forms will bring about "new social alignments and values". This, the paper admitted, will produce contradictions, e.g. a huge demand for consumer goods, and even some cries for "democracy"—which it carefully places in quotation marks to indicate that it means the "Anglo-American-type democracy" into which unwise Third World countries have rushed, only to find themselves shattered by repeated coups.

[1] See Lynn Pan, "Follow My Leader", ENCOUNTER, November 1987.

THIS IS THE final conundrum for the Party. Above all it fears national *luan* (chaos).[1] It also dreams of national wealth and power. If it pushes its profit-oriented economic policies too far, its adversaries may accuse it of heresy, or the overheated economy may suffer a Western-style collapse. If its economic relaxation proves successful, liberating Chinese energies and innovation, the masses will increasingly wonder why in the political realm alone the Party should remain supreme, when it has confessed that for 30 years or more (most of the history of the People's Republic) official Party policies kept China poor.

The supreme leadership continues to insist that "there is no other way". Deng Xiaoping's classic enunciation came in a series of inner-Party speeches in 1980.

> "China is led by the CCP and China's cause of socialist modernisation is carried out under the leadership of the CCP. This principle cannot be shaken. If it is, China will regress into division and confusion, and will then be unable to accomplish its modernisation."

Andrew Nathan observes in his penetrating *Chinese Democracy* (1986):

> "In short, after seven decades of a republic the Chinese people in Deng's view were still incapable of exercising power on their own. . . . They needed authoritative leaders to tell them where their interests lay."

Only recently, seven years on, Zhao Ziyang made the point again:

> "We shall never allow the kind of 'great democracy' that undermines state law and social stability. . . . We shall never . . . introduce a Western system of separation of the three powers and of different parties ruling the country in turn."

Zhao did not hide from his comrades that this Party which is uniquely qualified to rule is riddled with members who practice:

> ". . . tax evasion, smuggling and trafficking in smuggled goods, bribery, extortion, embezzlement and theft . . . moral degradation, breaking the law while in charge of executing it, divulging state secrets and economic information . . . violating discipline in dealing with foreigners . . . appointing people by favouritism and vindictively attacking others."

THE CHINESE HAVE TRADITIONALLY accepted a degree of mandarin corruption as long as the state was well-run. What was always regarded as a sign of end-of-dynasty decline, however, was an inability to rule. For at least two years this is the stigma the Party has not been able to throw off.

In his address Zhao drew a picture of a Party which in fact was going to rule less. Administration will now come increasingly into the hands of a bureaucracy chosen by competitive examination of technical and practical knowledge. (This sug-

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gestion had been made 90 years ago, in 1898, during the reign of a young, forward-looking Emperor whose mother, the Dowager Empress, put him under palace-arrest only 100 days after he began implementing it.) The Chinese Communist Party would content itself with grand planning. The "Party branch" which exists at virtually every level of life, from kindergartens to steel-making complexes, is (Zhao said) to disappear.

But it is too late for that kind of internal reform. On 2 November 1986, the intellectuals' newspaper, *Guangming Daily*, observed:

> "It has long been assumed that the ideal for the Chinese people is the realisation of Communism. . . . This is a narrow-minded view that has frightened patriots who wanted to make a contribution to the country."

A widely-published critic of Party totalism during 1986—who was silent during 1987—was Yan Jiaqi, director of the Political Science Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences. In the *Nanfang Daily* (of 14 September 1986), Yan reminded his countrymen that it was a fantasy to continue to believe that China was the world's central power. Neither Marxism nor the idea of a People's Republic, Yan noted, are Chinese concepts. China's unfortunate contribution is a certain kind of highly centralised power, the sort of power which resulted in the "Cultural Revolution"; and which continues to exist. Non-Marxist principles like the rule of law and restriction of official power "are of great value to mankind's spiritual civilisation. Nor can one say that Marxism is superior to humanism, which holds that human nature and not class is the source of emotion and value."

The student demonstrations of December 1986 and January 1987 resulted in the forced resignation of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, who was held responsible for the campus cries for increased democracy.[2] Three leading intellectuals were purged from the Party; and its ideologically conservative faction, egged on by Deng Xiaoping, began the latest campaign against "bourgeois liberalism", the omnibus official term for Western values in politics and culture. In August five more intellectuals, personally singled out by Deng—including Su Shaozhi, the creator of the theory of "primary-stage socialism"—were ordered to resign from the Party. All but one, including Su, declined to do so.

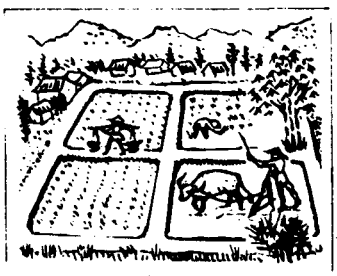
WHAT WAS PLAIN was that after a period of shock and dismay during the early spring of 1987, intellectuals—for the first time since their periodic purging began in the early 1950s—were refusing to collaborate, either by grovelling self-criticisms or by turning on those already purged in order to deflect possible persecution from themselves. In Peking they explained this to me in two ways. The older writers, artists, poets, and academics—who had been through the cruel repressions of the late 1950s, the "Anti-Rightist" campaign and the later Maoist wildness—didn't believe those terrible times could recur, and were too tough to give in to anything less. Younger intellectuals, in their thirties and forties, no longer respond patriotically to references to "the Long March" and the sacred nature of the revolutionary Party. For them the old imagery and symbols lost their meaning during the Cultural Revolution when they were used to disguise struggles for power and to justify political sadism. It is also true that leaders like Deng, despite their fury with ideological waverers, had through their own experiences with violence during the Cultural Revolution lost their taste for the full-blooded purge.

The public, too, would no longer stand for old-style liquidations. One of those purged in January, China's most famous investigative journalist, Liu Binyan, who had been purged for 20 years in 1957, has received tens of thousands of letters, food, and money from well-wishers since his ex-

[2] See in ENCOUNTER, April 1987, Anne McLaren, "Letter from Shanghai: Smashing the Second Confucius".

Another "Cultural Revolution"?

Beijing



IN AN INTERVIEW *in the Ministry of Culture, Ying Ruocheng talked about the problem of reform in the arts. Ying said: "The theatre groups should be able to choose their own plays. That, of course, is a sensitive area. In a Communist country, ideology is always controlled by the Party, by the progaganda department. In other words, censorship."*

HE SAID **that China did not have a government body, as did the Russians, to censor productions. But in China, he observed carefully, people are understandably cautious, given the repressions of the past. During the Cultural Revolution, Ying and his theatre company of 250 were denounced and exiled to the countryside, from 1968 to 1971, to plant rice while being "re-educated".**

During the last five years the growing popularity of movies and television has drawn audiences away from the theatres and almost halved the number of appearances by the performing-arts troupes. The companies most affected are those that stage the ancient traditional Peking Opera—which is described as being in crisis because young people do not attend—and also the provincial opera, folk dance, and acrobatic troupes.

THE MASS AUDIENCE **for film has proven a mixed blessing for film-makers. Censorship of movies by the Film Bureau is tighter than the constraints imposed on the theatre or publishing. The release of the popular film "A Small Town Called Hibiscus" was held up until the ending was altered.**

In the original film a madman appears, exclaiming that China will suffer another Cultural Revolution in six or seven years. The madman scene was retained but his prophecy was cut by the censor.

Seymour Topping

in the INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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pulsion from the Party. Su Shaozhi is known as "the man with 500 new friends" because of his many telephone-calls from well-wishers and sympathisers. Whereas, until recently, such purged men could have been sent to dig salt in the far West for speaking to foreigners, in 1987 careful meetings were reported.

THE MOST FAMOUS of all these dissidents is the astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, one of China's few scientists with an international reputation, dismissed from the presidency of the technological university in Anhui province (where the first campus demonstrations occurred in early December 1986). It would be hard to exaggerate the avalanche of Party abuse which landed on Fang and his two fellow-targets of the January purge. All three were very nearly charged with subversion, and Fang's remarks to students around the country were widely quoted against him, especially those referring to the Party as "black"—black being the colour the Party reserves to describe its enemies. Fang had urged intellectuals to test their strength by straightening their long-bent backs. By the time of his purge, students were referring to him as "our Sakharov".

But although the avalanche hit Fang it failed to bury him. He was brought to Peking, to a high-powered physics institute, to join his wife who was already teaching at the élite Peking University. Although the Chinese authorities barred him from attending last summer's celebrations of the tercentenary of Isaac Newton's *Principia* at Cambridge, Fang did travel to Italy, where he gave a number of astonishing interviews; the most startling was in *Cheng Ming*, the Hong Kong magazine which Peking most dislikes. The editor had flown to Italy to interview Fang who evidently intended his remarks to be seen and pondered at home. It was a particularly courageous interview because, as Fang told his interviewer, he and his wife had been expelled from the Party in 1958, at the height of the "Anti-Rightist" drive and "the Great Leap", and were not readmitted until 1979 (three years after Mao's death and the arrest of "the Gang of Four").

"The whole of Chinese society needs to be transformed, or to put it more precisely, transformed in all respects", Fang said. The forced resignation of the Party's General Secretary, Hu Yaobang (in January 1987), was believed to be wrong "by the Left, the middle, and the Right", but the "anti-bourgeois liberal" campaign which followed had two great effects:

> "Every bit of the conservatism has been swept into the dust [and students] see more clearly the essence of the system and understand they should not be too optimistic. . . . The current student movement is a struggle, fighting for democracy by democratic means."

But this struggle, Fang insisted, must be democratic and non-violent: "If you simply kill them [the older generation], the country will later return to the non-democratic road. . . ."

Fang noted that intellectuals no longer grovel before the Party:

> "They told lies because they were compelled to make known their own position on every issue. Now it can be said that Chinese intellectuals have the freedom of keeping silent. . . . But they will grow into a force in society, step by step, as the social background changes. This change will be very slow."

The German physicist Max Planck, said Fang, recalled that, in the end, his theories were accepted

> ". . . because all the old men are dead. Physicists call this episode 'the Planck effect'. In fact this name can also apply to society. You can hardly persuade the old generation to change their views. So what you can do is to apply the Planck effect; in other words, wait until all of them die."

THIS IS AN ESPECIALLY heretical view in China where, despite the recent emphasis on "youthfulness" and the undoubtedly younger new group of leaders, it remains true that age and experience give authority as surely as in the Confucian age. Su Shaozhi (the dismissed Director of the "Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought Institute"), while still a convinced Marxist, believes that the worship of the ideological tradition does nothing but damage. He notes that the Party's senior leaders learned their socialism from Stalin's *Short Course*, from which they picked up the notion that history moves progressively and certainly, and that anything which blocks this inevitable progress deserves to be swept aside. "They say they are socialists", Su has said, "but because they fear the loss of their personal power they increasingly act like the Kuomintang which they succeeded. They see their critics, just as Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek did, as their personal enemies."

The Stalinist legacy is a powerful one, Su wrote in 1986, in an essay then approved by the Party—the sort of thing which brought about his sacking a year later. "J. V. Stalin was the one and only one invested with the authority and power to hand down verdicts on questions of biology, linguistics, historical science, political economy, and what-have-you. When administrative authority is used to interfere in academic matters, the result is too painful to discuss."

Chinese-version Stalinism emerged after the "Hundred Flowers" of 1956, which encouraged intellectuals to speak their minds, even about the Party—and for their frankness then purged them in their tens of thousands. Some, like Fang Lizhi, waited more than twenty years for "rehabilitation". This, Su observed, showed the influence of the highly centralised and unified Stalin model. (The Party General Secretary at the time was Deng Xiaoping, who has maintained since then that the punishment of the "Rightists" was necessary but heavy-handed.) The Stalinist aura still hovers over China, Su wrote last year. If reform is to prove successful it will require:

> ". . . doing away with the attitude of stopping up one's ears and eyes, ceasing to be arrogant out of ignorance of others' achievements, and discontinuing the practice of repudiating everything and knocking down opposition views with one blow."

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A Chinese newspaper editor confided to me during the October Congress that what united Stalin, Pol Pot, Kim Il Sung—and Mao—was the conviction that "We represent history". This, he said regretfully, is what gives Westerners their main view of Communism: as large-scale extermination. But something new is emerging, he told me:

> "Now we have two parties—the Party and the People. Intolerance of bad policies is rising. But we hate to say what we think out loud, not just because of fear. But for many of us these are family matters, and we feel shame about what has happened here. . . ."

This shame—a pervasive emotion in East Asia where being seen to act badly by others is especially painful—extends even to the Party, according to one young scholar (a Chinese PhD candidate at an Ivy League university).

> "The leaders know their reputation is sinking fast, so they're trying to resuscitate the Party's reputation, with their own people and with foreigners. . . . Chinese are numbed politically. We think politics is just dirty manipulation. Our self-pride has turned into self-contempt for our political, economic, and cultural backwardness. . . . The Party is popular now just as long as it continues to make people's wallets fatter. Nothing else it can do will motivate anyone. . . . We used to respect the Party. Then we feared it. Now we just resent it."

How can one change such a system? This is a dangerous subject for Chinese to discuss, especially when both Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang have emphasised that, no matter what else changes, the Party must remain supreme and unchallenged. In the 1981 *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China* (edited, and admittedly watered down, by Deng himself), it was conceded that Mao's personality cult had brought suffering to China, by confounding the people with the enemy, and had prolonged its backwardness. It was conceded, as well, that "the Central Committee of the Party should be held partly responsible". But Deng's writers hurried to reaffirm that Mao's merits are "primary" and his errors "secondary" (although Zhao recently told a foreign journalist that for the last twenty years of his life the Chairman had been insane!) Even his *Thought* was "a crystallisation of the collective wisdom of the Communist Party".

These declarations and warnings make probing criticism of the system possible only in the oblique terms which Mandarins adopted centuries ago when dealing with Emperors who would have them beaten in open court for *lèse-majesté*. Even the confrontational Fang Lizhi confines himself to general hopes for the future, observations on what happens elsewhere, and to ironic references to official statements. He goes no farther than mentioning certain "mistakes" and "errors"—and this the Party permits. In the West, as Fang explains:

> "If a President has committed big mistakes he can be removed from his post. If a political party does not perform well, it can be replaced by another. Democracy is the key link to this guarantee. . . . Now the key argument [in China] is that the socialist principle is still quite all right, and the problem lies in the fact that this principle is not well implemented. . . . Such being the case, can you tell me what is failure? If you debate with them, they argue: 'How can our principle fail? Everybody agrees with it. You can only say we have not properly implemented the principle, but you cannot complain that the principle is not good. . . .'"

While the 13th Party Congress was in session in late October, half-a-mile away one of Zhao Ziyang's young economic advisers told me: "Soon the Party leaders are going to have to face a really big consumer demand—for democracy. They were willing to abolish the Communes. They are stepping back from the controls in economic administration. But how can they abolish themselves?"

Prayer

St Christopher, protect us, please,
From Man with his Sony Walkman set,
Afraid of silence as of speech—
Locked in his headphones' oubliette;

O comfort those compelled to hear
His ceaseless double concerto tape
For bluebottle and squeaky chalk
In train or bus, and no escape;

Look kindly on the traveller
Condemned to eavesdrop group or band
Whose constant unoiled-wheel-cum-whizz
Is more than flesh and blood can stand.

Simon Curtis

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Four Poems by Raymond Queneau

In the Event of a Stop Even Prolonged

The métro comes to a dead halt
the lights go out

silence

nobody budges
not a ship which moves
not a fisherman in the water
not a lantern

a joker shows off boo boo

and that's how the catacombs and the sewers
lead a whole people of ghosts
who sing the Carmagnole
on the air of Guillaume de Machaut
and Dies irae

with accompaniment of pipes
long teeth and hollow nose

they descend the length of the posters
on which they hide themselves
they go the whole length and breadth
striding across the dark
carriages
making currents of cold air

someone sneezes

at the same time the lights come on again

nobody budges
not even the posters on the wall
the métro sets off again

Harbour Water

Between the ship and the quay
lies the night
lies the night
between the ship and the quay
bottle-rack ends banana skins
float about and float about
between the ship and the quay
lie also a few blobs of gob
fag-ends and dead crabs
socks and old shoes
between the ship and the quay
moves vaguely a dead water
which wells up oozingly trembling
displacing to the heart of the darkness
all the debris and the waste
of the ocean first approach
of port-holes must look at that
waiting to depart
flown over by gulls which squall
towards a purified horizon
the sea having devoured everything

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The Autumn Lily-of-the-Valley

A lorry driver
on his dash-board
cultivates a blade of lily-of-the-valley
which honours the autumn
as far as it is possible
for a very sad lily-of-the-valley to do
A november lily-of-the-valley
the two fingers of the windscreen-wiper
follow the rain which trembles
in veins which leave traces
outside the dry arcs
a spot of water would be good for
a lily-of-the-valley which is in danger
but he must press on
and as Heraclitus said
one never puts one's wheel twice
in the same rut

Ageing

my youth is over
my youth has vanished
i sit on my backside
forty years of existence
i have assumed the chastity
of maturity
here i am going grey
putting on a belly
i cough and i talk cock
already already already
Ah! when i was a young man
how happy i was! like
a lizard in the sun
watching my toes turn brown
at the water's edge
watching my frame
assume its full form
the years counted for little
the days were light
and all the nights soft
the sky was truly blue
the moons were round
the snow was kissed with warmth
blondes were blondes
well-turned super calves
foot sure and eye precise
yes yes but now
it's quite quite different
i'm at the end of my course
i'm going downhill
dies irae dies illa
sic ibo ad astra

but as this joker
going down in a lift
said to the spectators
at each floor level
who were watching him descend
"so far upon my word
it's not too bad at all
i firmly hope
it can go on a bit like this"
and so despite the years
the wrinkles and the bladder
the corporation and the
emphysema
the cough and a state of mind
somewhat nostalgic
philosophically
i grow old trying
to rejoice at what remains
minus fire and minus coal
minus bacon's streaky streaks
minus eggs minus cinema
minus whisky minus soda
minus butter minus taxi
minus tea or chocolate
i write a few poems
which i hope are equal
to those i composed
when i was twenty
what's more i signed them
in the same way
q-u-e-n-e-a-
u-r-a y mond

Translated by Gordon H. Dyson

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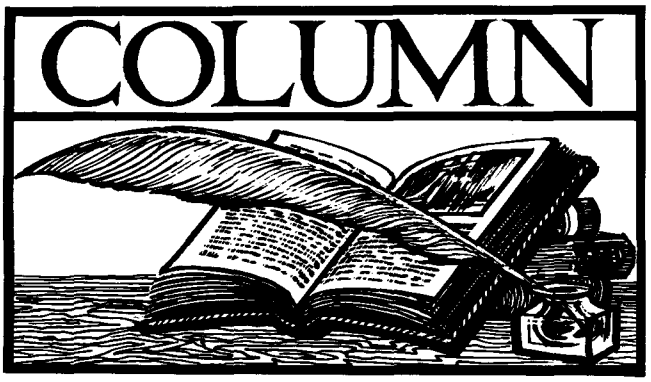

IT COULD BE a scene from a film of the supernatural. A man is at work stripping wallpaper from a room in his apartment. Imagine him in shirt-sleeves and jeans—youngish, American, with a neat fair moustache. He is scraping with a knife at chest level. Layer after layer comes off: a thin modern paper with powerful modern glue; an older, embossed equivalent which peels off stiffly; faded roses; stripes; medallions; paler, nondescript, brownish paper, porous and friable as bread. He brushes the last fragments from a cleared place the size of a man's hand. This at last is the wall. And as the paper dust is smoothed away, he sees staring out at him from the surface a painted eye.

This happened to a friend of mine. What he had uncovered was a 13th-century wall-painting. State experts came to investigate; meticulous craftsmen spent months removing the rest of the paper; eventually, two walls were cleared. To this day, the painting remains a mystery: it contains human figures, animals, and grotesque hybrids. Good and evil, spiritual and fleshly seem to be contrasted; but, although the figures are set in Gothic niches, there are no religious or Church motifs. Scholars are still pondering the origin and meaning of this extraordinary find.

It was made in Montpellier, capital of the Hérault *département*, a few miles from the sea on that great curve of southern France which sweeps round from Marseille towards Spain. Behind it lie *les Causses*, the scrubby limestone sheep plateaux renowned for Roquefort and *bleu des Causses* cheese. Today, the A9 *autoroute* passes Montpellier's southern fringes, and little Air France planes fly direct from London to the local Fréjorgues airport: but the old town, despite new street signs, discreet floodlights, and similar slight prettification, still looks and feels authentic. Narrow, steep, irregular streets are paved in stone worn smooth by centuries. Buildings are thick-walled and solid: former warehouses, now homes and shops, can be identified by their barrel vaulting. Spain and Italy seem close. My friend's apartment, above a courtyard hidden by huge doors, is reached by a later spiral staircase similar to that built in the 16th century for Francis I at the *château* of Blois.

Compared to that, the house I live in seems an upstart, only 150 years old. But even this Regency stripling, designed by Nash's son-in-law and done over by generations of previous Crown tenants, gives one a satisfying sense of continuity with the past. In geological time, of course, the span is minuscule; the whole earth has antecedents which dwarf our mayfly lives. Yet, for me, a major pleasure of living in Europe is precisely the feeling that tangible objects around us—buildings, pictures, furniture, books—date back well beyond our frantic century of ferro-concrete, acrylic paint, polystyrene foam, and unsewn paperbacks.

This thought was haunting me last January when, with 150 others, I took part in an "International Symposium on European Cultural Identity" organised in Paris by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its pretext was a supposed quotation from Jean Monnet, "father" of the European Community, to the effect that Europe must have a cultural basis if it's to be united at all. Personally, I never heard Monnet say that: but if it means that Europeans should be aware of their common heritage, and understand each other's tacit presuppositions, then it seems reasonable enough. Here, as often happens, the word "culture" was being used ambiguously. To some of the participants, it no doubt meant what Hermann Goering said made him reach for his revolver—Kulchur, as Ezra Pound spelt it, or literature and the various other arts. What really seemed worth discussing, however, was "culture" in the anthropological sense—a way of life, a set of shared assumptions, social and political similarities disguised but not obliterated by differences of language and style.

The French style on this occasion was as much to the fore as the French language. "*Rien ne se fait, en France, sans gueuleton*", said one of my companions; and, true to form, the debates were punctuated by subtle and delicious meals. Gilt chairs, white damask, shining crystal were matched by rich pâté, complex sauces, and noble wines. Mealtime speeches were succinct and relevant: but the real interest of these sessions at small round tables was the chance to talk with fellow-delegates—some of them old friends and veterans of such gabfests, others less familiar except from their articles and books. There's no doubt at all that good food and a modicum of alcohol can smooth out shyness or reticence: so did the feeling of being a hand-picked bunch. We were many of us rather like people invited on a television programme, slightly aglow with the sense of occasion, chattering excitedly in the hospitality room.

AS A BUNCH, though, we were motley. One of the oldest and most eminent was Alberto Moravia: he spoke briefly and elegantly in French. The German list included the cineast Wim Wenders; the British, Douglas Johnson and Theodore Zeldin; the French, Jean-Marie Benoist, Alain Besançon, Michel Butor, Régis Debray, Edgar Faure, and Edgar Morin. Thirty-two countries were represented altogether: they included the Vatican, in the person of Cardinal Koenig, former Archbishop of Vienna. His Jewish opposite number, in the French delegation, was the Grand Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat.

Before the meeting, France had sent *missi dominici*, as it were, to all her partners in the European Community, to prepare the ground and produce a series of reports, published by Albin Michel under the title *Lettres d'Europe*. These varied greatly in quality. Michel Butor, from his trip to Britain, summarised accurately the half-sceptical views of his interlocutors: the report from Ireland rather emphasised pubs. Two Irish writers, as it happened, were among the very few who spoke English at the symposium. Both speeches poked

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mild fun at the country whose language they borrowed and improved.

The best public statements were the most practical—recommendations to raise the standard of translating, encourage culture-contact, exploit new television technology, promote cross-frontier cooperation among newspapers and magazines. The most tedious interventions were those whose general message was "Europe's strength resides in Europe's diversity", expressed in countless metaphors and often at inordinate length. The worst offenders in verbosity were two German speakers on the final afternoon, when the chairman had limited speeches to three minutes each. Neither of this dogged pair was going to drop a single second of his prepared lecture: each read it out at immense speed, barely looking at the dazed audience. The interpreters went ape.

WHAT FINALLY emerged from the proceedings? A boost for the French Foreign Minister, suggested some cynics. Others thought the jamboree an attempt to upstage President Mitterrand's reception for Nobel Prize-winners, or to divert the public from the impending presidential election. I doubt all such allegations. The meeting seemed to me a sensible response to an important question: do Europeans have enough in common to sustain a single polity, whether Community, confederation, or federation of States? If so, how can they become aware of it? If not, can closer kinship be fostered, and in that case how?

History, as I've hinted, supplies at least one answer. Most countries in Western Europe, and many in the East, have undergone the influence of Greece and Rome, and of the medieval Empire. The same is true of Judaism, Christianity, and the Church. Most have been touched by the Reformation and the 18th-century Enlightenment. All have shared nationalism and war; all have experienced a series of Industrial Revolutions. The relics of their past lie all about them, and not all in ruins. For most people, the past is present, however dimly perceived.

More fundamentally, Europeans share a particular geography. Theirs is a very small continent, in effect a promontory of Asia. It has a complicated westward coastline, fretted with bays and creeks. Its climates are mainly temperate. Its territory is minutely divided by seas, rivers, and mountains. It has a multitude of peoples and languages. It pioneered modern science and technology: it espoused the idea of change and progress: even its clothing is copied throughout the world.

YET, IN this century, Europeans have felt themselves receding. European empires have been dismantled, and some former subject peoples overseas have sent "reverse settlers" to the former "home countries", creating a new, sometimes awkward racial mix. Cheap imports from the Far East have threatened Europe's traditional industries and pre-empted some areas of new technology. China's teeming millions contrast with falling European birth-rates. And, most obviously, Europe's once Great Powers have been dwarfed by the US and USSR super-States.

This, very obviously, was a sub-text at the Paris symposium. If part of the problem, for a European cultural identity, was to transcend narrow national horizons, another was to differentiate Europe's culture from that of either of the world's superpowers. "Soon", said one delegate, "Europeans will be watching American soap-operas on Japanese TV sets with the aid of European satellites." How can they resist what used to be called Coca-colonisation as well as *glasnostalgia* for Soviet Socialism without tears?

THE WORRY IS far from novel. Long before World War II, Aldous Huxley was lamenting what he called "modern homogeneity". Many saw it, even then, as "Americanisation". And, leaving aside such trivia as the spread of tea-bags and the taste for fast food, there is a deep sense in which both the US and USSR share attributes with Europe. The Soviet Union hypertrophied some elements of the Enlightenment, and imported the ideology of Germany's Karl Marx. The United States, peopled by Europeans, based its Constitution on French and British democratic political thought. The New World, for many of its immigrants, was there to redress the imperfections of the old. On this broad level of analysis, Americans are Europeans writ large, while even the Soviets pay lip-service to European ideals. Mr and Mrs Gorbachov, a recent close observer has reported, seem quite remarkably "European"; and Soviet citizens are proud of the good press that both have enjoyed in the West—whatever Lewis Carroll may have written about "gently smiling jaws".

At the same time, no European visitor to either superpower can avoid feeling *dépaysé* in quite fundamental ways. In the East, the difference is obvious: a primitive economy, very little private enterprise, no independent press or other media, a heavy-handed bureaucracy, much State propaganda, lingering undertones of fear. In America, the sense of not-being-really-at-home is subtler, harder to pin down. It has to do with minor matters: the small space given to foreign stories in the newspapers; the absence of offal—liver, hearts, kidneys—from American menus; the piped music in elevators; the carnival clothes worn by old gentlemen on holiday; the enormous distances Americans will drive to a cocktail party; the hard drinking before luncheon, followed by water at table; the dearth of decent bookshops and the ubiquity of the week's best-sellers; the virtual impossibility of "going for a country walk". And, capping it all, the uncomprehending condescension of many Americans when a European remarks on such things. No wonder, when Europeans meet in America, they're keenly aware of their kinship, whatever their nationalities. In the Soviet Union, of course, they feel like Siamese twins.

Such feelings are enhanced by what the superpowers have in common—not least, the fact of being superpowers. Both, compared with Europe, are very extensive: some of their inhabitants have never seen the sea. Both are relatively uniform—in language, diet, dress, and political institutions. Neither is classless, but each pretends to be—more strenuously than Europe, where patricians still survive. Each, too,

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is often blamed—sometimes unjustly—for naivety or boorishness: Europeans fancy themselves more sophisticated, civilised, and worldly-wise.

"WHEN ELEPHANTS FIGHT, run for cover: when elephants mate, run just as fast." Some Europeans have recalled that adage as President Reagan and Mr Gorbachov have pursued their cautious courting ritual. Underlying it is a perennial fear in Europe: that some day, somehow, Europe's interests may be steam-rollered in the cause of East-West *détente*. Contemporary as it seems, that concern was voiced most vividly almost 30 years ago, in a 1959 television play called *The Offshore Island*. The island, of course, was Britain. What it suffered was subjugation by US and Soviet forces, combining to enforce a joint superpower peace.

The play's author was the late and much-missed Marghanita Laski, who died in early February after an illness which took everyone by surprise. Readers of the 400th issue of ENCOUNTER, in which she wrote about Rebecca West, will know that she was at the height of her powers. She was eagerly planning her next article for the magazine, on popular arts. As a friend and colleague, she was delightful. *Petite*, almost girlish, with a relishing mouth and eyes that would search one's own with keen, approving curiosity, she had the gift of making one feel both intelligent and appreciated. But there was nothing soft in her approach. Her voice made that clear—crisp, well-educated, precise and conclusive, like biting through a hard apple: crunch.

And what she said was strict and well-considered. Having written novels herself, she had little time for self-indulgent fiction: she liked plots and character, mystery and suspense. She read many detective stories; but her real allegiance was to classic literature and to the English language. She used it herself, even in conversation, with exact mastery: most of her spoken sentences would have stood the test of print. An atheist, or perhaps an agnostic, she valued the Bible and Prayer Book and deplored their mutilation. Very much an Englishwoman, she maintained close and fond ties with France.

For me, Marghanita Laski embodied a great deal of what that Paris symposium was seeking. She would not now, I think, have wished us to read her 1959 play as neutralist, calling down a plague on both superpower houses, or envisaging Europe as a Third Force. But she did believe in a uniting Europe, and in Britain's place within it; and by precept and example she upheld European values: tolerance, but not of everything; fairness, but not aloof; rationality, but not cold. She cared passionately for art, good food, good company, and good friends. She lived in an historic house on Hampstead Heath, Capo di Monte, which Nikolaus Pevsner rightly called "that bijou of a cottage". I doubt she ever uncovered a medieval painting there; but I feel her own bright eye still watching us, even now.

M

Make Believe

Say I were not sixty,
say you weren't near-hundred,
say you were alive:
say my verse was read
in some distant country,
and say you were idly turning the pages;

The blood washed from your shirt,
the tears from your eyes,
the earth from your bones;
neither missing since 1940,
nor dead as reported later
by a friend of a friend of a friend. . . .

Quite dapper you stand in that bookshop
and chance upon my clues.

That is why at sixty
when some publisher asks me
for biographical details,
I still carefully give
the date of my birth,
the name of my hometown:

GERDA MAYER born '27 in Karlsbad
Czechoslavakia . . . write to me, father.

Gerda Mayer

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NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from Ecuador

A Whiff of CS Gas

By Alistair Horne

WHILE I WAS IN Quito recently, life came to a halt abruptly as the Government proclaimed a "State of Emergency" to quell a national strike organised by the Left-wing trade unions, bearing the agreeably suggestive acronym of *FUT*. It stands for the *Frente Universitario de Trabajadores*. An amalgam of Left activists and the usual student militants took to the streets in a day of violent protests. Barricades of burning tyres, rather ineptly placed, were met by very ancient tanks and by heavily armed troops and riot police during the 24 hours that martial law lasted. CS tear-gas was liberally used, and at one point the forces of law-and-order won a tactical triumph by trapping demonstrators in one of Quito's few underpasses, and tossing CS canisters into the entrances.

It was the sixth national strike called by *FUT* since the present Government of Ecuador took over just three years ago. That it was in no mood to trifle was indicated by the fact that the State of Emergency was open-ended, implying a clear threat to suspend—if need be—the Constitution; which would have made it approximately the twentieth since Simon Bolivar gave Ecuador her independence. To find oneself here, as a lecturer on a British art study tour, in the midst of all the CS gas and burning tyres, made one feel a little like Boot of *The Beast*, as well as providing a sense of *déjà vu*. The last day I spent in South America, sixteen years previously, had been to the accompaniment of a riot in Bogota. But that was a serious affair (the Colombians having even coined a word, *Bogotazo*, for the violence of a particular ferocity that once ravaged the country), in commemoration of the anniversary of the Army's killing of Colombia's Ché, a Left-wing priest guerrilla called Camilo Torres. That day would have ended in a bloodbath, but for the intervention of hail-stones the size of golf-balls and the roughness of the Colombian Army. Somehow, in this enchanting and gentle-seeming "Célesteville" capital of neighbouring Ecuador, nerly two miles up in the Andes, with its ravishing Spanish colonial churches and blazing pink *arupa* trees, it is hard to believe that things could ever get so bad.

On the other hand, both Government and Army were clearly in a nervy mood—not for the first time in Ecuador, where every available wall was covered with political slogans for the forthcoming National Elections.

Ecuador has had a turbulent past. More than most countries of Latin America, fate has been kind to her neither in the shape of natural forces nor in her neighbours. The smallest but one of the continent, slightly bigger than the United Kingdom, it was four times its present size as the "Presidency of Quito" before the coming of Bolivar. Successive disputes with its neighbours have whittled it down—the last being a disastrous war with Peru in 1941, while the rest of the world was preoccupied with Hitler. (Ecuador had made the cardinal error of letting her Army be trained by the Italians.) As a result, Peru grabbed half of Ecuador's Oriente province in Amazonia, later discovered to be rich in oil. And so Ecuador still refuses to accept the 1942 frontier as definitive.

Ecuador once possessed one of the lowest per-capita incomes in the Third World; oil, with US economic support and improved trade policies has brought it relative prosperity in recent years. Then oil prices slumped; five years ago, a vagary of the *El Niño* current in the Pacific unleashed rainstorms that washed away the last stretch of the Guayaquil-Quito railway, that miracle of British engineering from the turn of the century. The line is still not repaired (as we discovered when we had to climb off the train half-way, at Riobamba). Earlier in 1987, severe earthquakes in the Oriente severed communications there—but, much worse, it also severed the pipeline that brings the oil on which the whole economy depends.

This is part of the background to the State of Emergency. Because of the country's economic plight, through little fault of its own, the unhappy Sucre fell by 10% against the Pound Sterling, even during the few days I was in Ecuador—making it surely one of the cheapest and most agreeable countries for tourists.

BUT THIS IS ONLY part of the story. Since Independence from Spain in 1820, Ecuador has suffered from a *mouvementé* political life that reads like passages from Conrad's marvellous (and all-too-seldom-read) novel, *Nostromo*. Power has alternated between the feudalist ultra-Catholic Conservatives of the mountains, the *Serraños*, and the Liberal "*Costeños*" of the coast. One of the many Englishmen fighting for Bolivar, Colonel Francis Hall, was hanged from a lamp-post for his troubles in 1833. He was followed by a former President, Garcia Moreno, Conservative, who was assassinated on the steps of Government Palace while running for a third term. A Liberal writer, Juan Montalvo, exulted: "My pen has killed him!" Just outside my hotel stood a beacon to the first Liberal leader, Alfaro, who was torn to pieces by a Quito mob in 1911. In the century since Independence, Ecuador went through 16 Constitutions, approximately one every 7 years, with 22 presidents, or dictators (or military juntas) in the 25 years following 1925.

Between 1973 and 1979, the Army moved in to counter-

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act economic and military chaos, but were even happier to move out again. Since October 1984, the country has been ruled with fair efficiency—by the Conservative Leon Febres Cordero, but with a strongly Left-wing Congress. President Cordero and an effective Army Chief-of-Staff, General Asanza (backed by an army that has been trained by US anti-terrorist experts), have been remarkably successful in eradicating the country's guerrillas.

TERRORISM IN THE Andean nations in general—in a geography so superbly designed to aid and abet it—shows an interesting pattern. Sixteen years ago, in Colombia, the situation was reasonably well under control; now, with the Cuban-supported *M-19* on the rampage, murdering political leaders and newspaper editors at will, the situation is once again at its worst. The same goes for Peru. In 1971, General Velasco's military Junta had all but destroyed the terrorists; now, things have never been more menacing. The wobbly Garcia government is trembling under the scourge of the mysterious *Sendero Luminoso*, with its strange and anachronistic veneration for Mao, and even Pol Pot. Another outfit, the Cuban-orientated *MRTA*,[1] has recently opened up a new front—apparently in league with both *Sendero* and the cocaine-growers (or "narco-terrorists" as Lima calls them).

In Bolivia, endemically even poorer than Peru, an American-trained army succeeded in rounding up and killing the idolised but inept Ché Guevara at the end of the 1960s. After my last trip in 1971, when I wrote for ENCOUNTER ("The Guerrillas of Teoponte", December 1971) about the students who had gone into the jungle in emulation of Ché, and been killed, all was still uneasy and I was even held up by student gunmen trying to exact tribute for their cause. Now Bolivia seems to be free of terrorism. The same goes for Chile, where the Left-wing *MIR* was blatantly taking over great tracts of land under the averted gaze of Allende in the 1970s. Now the steel grip of Pinochet has them in check; though it is an open question what new terrorism may be unleashed once Pinochet gives way to promised free elections in the next two years.

MEANWHILE, IN LITTLE Ecuador—as in Bolivia—a measure of peace prevails. Undoubtedly, tough measures have been employed against the terrorists—but probably not to the point claimed by the Left, which tried to make "Human Rights" one of the principal issues against Cordero in the recent national strike. Cordero's Prime Minister, Luis Robles, had been impeached by Congress on these issues, but refused to quit—and the President refused to remove him. Behind the strikes called by *FUT*, there were also the usual articulate calls, orchestrated by the Left, of "*Yanqui* Go Home!"

In March last year an *opera bouffe* coup took place. An Air Force officer, Maldonado, kidnapped President Cordero and held him hostage until the imprisoned Left-wing leader, General Frank Vargas (no relation of the Peruvian hero-novelist, Mario Vargas Llosa), was released from house arrest. But the Armed Forces remained loyal to the President; Maldonado is now serving 16 years imprisonment—an additional red rag to the opposition.

In January this year Ecuador went to the polls; congressional, municipal, and local elections all at once, plus the first run-off of the Presidential elections (the system is based on France's). At the last poll for the Presidency, in 1984, ten people were killed in internecine clashes between the parties; this time one man was killed and several others wounded in a shoot-up.

There were seventeen political parties fielding ten Presidential candidates, of whom three (including Vargas) were regarded as "dangerous loonies". If any of them had got a majority vote, it was widely expected that the Army would return. The second ballot is to be held on 8 May, when Rodrigo Borja Cervallos of the respectable Social Democratic Party looks like the favourite. But in this volatile country anything may yet happen. With its own experiences added to those of Peru and Argentina, the Army, however, is most reluctant to come out of its barracks—and it is under pressure from Washington (which has US military units here, currently repairing the all-important roads and pipelines, as well as advising on anti-terrorism) not to do so. Ecuador, too, badly needs dollars to finance new mineral exploitations that could revolutionise her frail economy; so she will have to try to be on her best behaviour. At the same time, a hard struggle is going on behind the scenes, with British Aerospace trying to sell Jaguars to the tiny and antiquated Ecuadorian Air Force, against a redoubtable competitor—Israel, now offering its *Kfir* fighter for export.

Despite all this excitement, Ecuador remains an engaging and exquisitely beautiful country to visit, with courteous, gentle and smiling people, and hotels and restaurants that are hard to fault. One day we rode—clinging to the roof, in the best *Butch Cassidy* style—on the little red train that plies the Guayaquil railway to Riobamba, around the majestic volcanoes of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo, chased by dogs, amid a Babar-like scenery that Ecuadorians justly call their "Garden of Eden". It was, I felt, a memorable day. Our group-leader even claimed that the CS gas had done wonders for her sinus. So no one complained. I left Quito with the impression that while the Ecuadorians as a whole are comforting themselves with a certain element of *Schadenfreude*, things, after all, are much worse for their old foes, the Peruvians, where (since Garcia's take-over of the banks) money is flooding out in torrents from the last few million dollars of bankrupt Peru's reserves.

In Lima I found a particularly pleasing graffito: ALAN [Garcia] GOT IT RIGHT: THE LOONIES ARE IN WALL STREET. Everything in South America is relative: peace, poverty, prosperity, partisans in the hills—and a sense of humour.

[1] *MRTA* stands for "Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement"—named after the last Inca, who was cruelly done to death by the *Conquistadores* in Cuzco four centuries ago. So it cloaks itself with appeal among the indigenous Indians, backward and appallingly underprivileged, who form a vast majority of Peru's 20 million population. It is fairly predictable, however, that—as in every other South American insurrection carried out in the name of the Indians—they will end up the losers.

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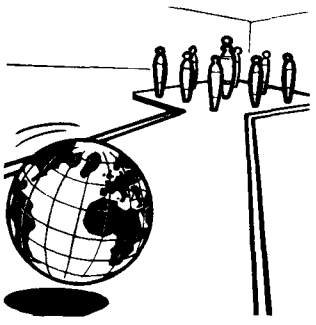
Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

The Issues of Our Time



IN COLLECTING TOGETHER in one volume[1] the four works of political reflections that I have published since 1970, I hoped to bring out the thread that runs through them. They are like stages of a single reflection on the same central theme. The theme is the greatest question of our time: namely, the global struggle between the democratic system and the totalitarian system. As I see it, all other questions are dependent on this one, and the answer history gives to them will depend on the outcome of that struggle. Neither "the future of the Third World", or the prospects for scientific and technological progress, or the difficulties raised by the "new aggressiveness of Islam", or (of course) "the protection of human rights", can be considered or even formulated in a way that makes any sense at all outside the context of the world-wide confrontation between totalitarianism and democracy. What is at stake in that confrontation goes far beyond the purely political sphere of a simple rivalry of interests and power: it is a question of human nature, the meaning of existence and its values—in short, the entire ethical sphere.

In *Ni Marx, ni Jésus* (*Without Marx or Jesus*), which was written and published in 1970, I concluded that socialism, practically and ethically, was a failure and that liberal societies were superior. For the two decades following the Second World War there was still room for doubt. Capitalism might slide into a crisis similar to the one that had befallen it in 1929; Communism might liberalise itself; and Socialism might turn out to be the answer for the Third World. None of these hypotheses proved correct. The efficacy of liberal, democratic capitalism revealed itself as incomparably greater than that of socialism (and its power of cultural creation far superior). Even the crisis that first appeared in 1973 subsequently showed capitalism and democracy to possess a capacity for resourcefulness and renewal that socialism and totalitarianism lacked completely. As far as the dignity of man, his freedom, and the growth of his cultural autonomy were concerned, socialist societies merited the role of villain in this domain far more than the exemplary role to which they had laid claim.

[1] Jean-François Revel, *Ni Marx, ni Jésus; La tentation totalitaire; La Grâce de l'État; Comment les démocraties finissent* (Laffont, 1986).

What, then, was the source of the persistent attraction they exerted—despite their undoubted failures—over so many men who were fortunate enough to live outside their embrace? That was the subject of *La tentation totalitaire* (*The Totalitarian Temptation*), written in 1975 and published at the beginning of 1976. Is there something in man that yearns for a life of slavery in a condition of poverty? It is not implausible. I described some of the symptoms of this disconcerting tendency, which sometimes seems to be driving the democracies to destroy themselves from within.

Added to this internal danger—and in practice working in conjunction with it—there is the external threat of totalitarianism, which is bent entirely on annihilating or weakening democratic civilisations. Which of the two systems is better equipped, more consistent, more persistent, and more resourceful when it comes to fighting, eliminating, or converting the other? That was the question on which I sought to shed light in *Comment les démocraties finissent* (1983; *How Democracies Perish*) by examining the development of the relationship between their forces and their respective positions during this century, and more particularly over the last 40-50 years. The book was not so much concerned with establishing a chronicle of events as with isolating the underlying laws or (shall we say, more modestly?) regular workings of each of the two systems, their respective strong and weak points, and the typical arrangements peculiar to each in action and reaction.

La Grâce de l'État (published in November 1981) is a kind of illustration in the margin of this trilogy. In it I tell how, within the pluralist, cultured, democratic industrial society of France, we experienced an anachronistic attempt to "break with capitalism", a resurgence of ideological pre-history within a sophisticated culture and a developed structure. This book is a reflection on the hideous mistakes that were made during the first four months of France's "socialist experiment", a time of intolerance and folly that a chaste amnesia later shrouded in a patriotic and most charitable oblivion.

After 1958 *la gauche non communiste française* repeatedly passed up the opportunity to reconstruct itself as a modern Left in that it omitted to undertake an analysis of contemporary societies as they function in reality. All it did was to reconstitute itself electorally by forming an alliance with the Communists, while rendering itself intellectually and politically archaic. The result was an ideological regression that, when the Left came to power, very soon caused it to be rejected by society, including many voters who had initially been in favour of "socialism".

IT IS interesting that the Socialist Government's earliest electoral reverses occurred at the beginning of 1982, when it had been in power for only six months—that is to say, before the pernicious effects of its economic policy had had time to hit purchasing power, employment, and the French franc. The electorate's early change of heart resulted more from a kind of animosity towards the ideological arrogance of the Mitterrand régime than from any material disappointment. That was to affect electoral choices only later. As is well known, from the spring of 1982—even more in 1983 in reac-

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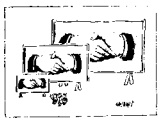
tion to the pressure of public opinion and their own economic failures, and then in 1984 following their rout in the European elections and the débâcle of their Education Act—the Socialists were forced to abandon their course of "*la construction du socialisme*". It was yet another proof of the usefulness of democracy.

Several chapters of *Ni Marx, ni Jésus* are based on data that have changed since. For instance, the political picture presented by Western Europe is clearly no longer the same as in 1970, for Spain, Greece, and Portugal have all ceased to be dictatorships. Note that the excessive optimism—for which critics chided me—was not entirely unjustified, for the democratic revolution has gained ground in nearly every country with the exception of the socialist countries or those annexed by international communism. This surely proves that capitalism is not incompatible with freedom; whereas socialism is.

My chapter on France, likewise, reflects a fact that was of crucial importance at the time but is today fading into insignificance: namely, the size and obstructive effect of the French Communist Party. The complementarity of Gaullism and Communism in keeping the liberal-Left out of power dominated French political life for 25 years. In *La Grâce de l'État* (chapter 8) I analysed the circumstances and reasons behind the break-up of the tacit alliance between Gaullists and Communists. But *l'union de la gauche*, though politically dead, had left its ideological mark on the Socialists.

Tocqueville's Shadow



THERE WILL BE *reverberations from the Washington summit for years to come, by its defenders, critics and historians. I caught one echo in a recent insightful piece by Frank Johnson, who covered the summit for the London "Times". Since he used an old (and new) book of mine as a counter I am venturing a go at the troubling vista of the Western future he has opened.*

Mr Johnson's piece is about two men linked improbably by history over a long span—the ebullient extrovert of an actor-president named Ronald Reagan and a French intellectual introvert, Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote the greatest book every written about the budding American civilisation: "Democracy in America" (1835-40).

In a buoyantly overflowing toast at the state dinner for Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov, Mr Reagan cited a classic passage from de Tocqueville's book, saying that "the brilliant French observer foresaw that our two countries would be the major countries in the world." The actual full passage, which I used in my "America As a Civilization" (1957), ended with:

> *"Each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."*

No wonder Mr Reagan stayed shy of the passage itself, which would make America and Soviet Russia partners—or even rivals—in the destiny-swaying effort.

FOR ONE THING **the Soviets don't recognise the deity engaged in "the will of Heaven". More seriously, it would bring up the fact that each of the "major countries" is linked with a whole cluster of others, one in a pretty naked Soviet empire, the other in what I called in my book the post-World War II "imperium" of the West.**

At this point, Frank Johnson and I part company. While he generously assesses the new edition of my "America As a Civilization" (he calls it America's "domestic Tocqueville"), he faults me for interpreting the famous passage as prophesying that Russia and America are "Cold War" rivals, and he praises Mr Reagan for "getting it right".

I CAN'T GO ALONG. *Obviously de Tocqueville could not foresee either World War II or the Cold War. He was a young French thinker, sensitive (as other Europeans were) to the two great powers emerging on each side of Europe.*[1] *The passage is packed with sharp contrasting images for America and Russia.*

> **"The principal instrument of the former [Tocqueville wrote] is freedom, of the latter, servitude."**

Can there be any question that this was—for his day—the equivalent of what we have recognised since 1945 as the overall dividing line in two power structures?

Yet the difference between my reading of de Tocqueville and Frank Johnson's article is less important than the ground we share about the potential dangers of the summit. Calling his piece "Europe—INF Outsider", Mr Johnson is troubled by the prospect of a series of agreements to come which will leave Europe exposed to the superior conventional arms of the giant on its borders.

I FEEL TROUBLED **that way, too. But my greater disquiet comes from the prospect of the uncoupling of the Alliance which forms the Western imperium, with America as the first among equal partners.**

In a chapter on "the New America" which I added to the 1987 edition of my book, I saw NATO as only the military cement of that partnership. An equally important cement is the sense of shared trust between the members, the almost mythic belief especially in America as the great protective partner, with its science, technology and innovative energy.

The military cement can crack a bit, but there is enough strength in it to hold. But the cement of shared trust and the common myth of life values and moral commitment is more vulnerable. If it starts to crack—if not only Europe but Japan, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the other Americas are shaken in their belief in the protective American role—then we will be witnessing the uncoupling of the West.

THERE HAS BEEN *much talk of the change in Ronald Reagan's vision and his intentions toward the Soviets. For myself, it isn't his intentions that trouble me. It is the question of whether he—and we—can see far enough and deep enough to descry the unintended consequences of his well-intended coming actions.*

FRANK JOHNSON **blames what is happening on the American "sheer demand for newness". Yes, but I would add the American belief that military power is somehow evil and that disarming will invest the power that remains with a soul. But that won't happen if we decouple the only grand alliance of the century that has held the West together for so long.**

Max Lerner

MAX LERNER, historian and author, is a syndicated columnist for the *New York Post*.

[1] ED. NOTE: *See in* ENCOUNTER, *February 1979, Theodore Draper's historical article, "The Idea of the 'Cold War' and its Prophets: On Tocqueville & Others".*

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Will that mark ever fade? Will the French Socialist Party, fortified by its experience of power (and what Scott Fitzgerald called "the authority of failure") manage to provide France with the kind of *gauche moderne* that it failed to become in the 1960s? True, the Socialists have broken with the Communists. True, they have in practice abandoned virtually all their 1981 ideas. But refraining from making mistakes when compelled to by reality does not mean that one will not resume making them should the slightest occasion present itself. The French *droite* has managed to evolve intellectually; *la gauche* has not.

In this connection readers will also notice, in the chapter on France in *Ni Marx, ni Jésus*, the length at which I discuss the *Radical Manifesto* of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and Michel Albert. There is a very simple reason for this: it was virtually the only Left-wing liberal, or reforming, proposal advanced in our country during that period. And that programme was crushed beneath the double pressure of the traditional Right and the Marxist Left, then in the process of regrouping on the basis of a return to 19th-century ideology.

What I said in the same book about excessive nuclear weapons now seems to me to have been mistaken. Readers should understand, however, that my mistake reflected the situation at the time. It was the dawn of *détente*. Western and, in particular, American military might appeared so superior to that of the Soviet Union that the threat from the East seemed derisory. French defence and foreign policy began to look like political platforms directed essentially against the Atlantic alliance. That was how the Soviets saw them too; and they were delighted. The degree to which we had underestimated Soviet expansionism came to light over the next ten years—during the so-called *détente* period. It enabled the Soviets to achieve parity or even superiority in armaments *vis-à-vis* the West, and to take up positions on every continent and in every ocean.

On the other hand, what I wrote about "the myth of the revolutionary Third World" seems to me to have formulated pretty clearly the terms of a debate that was not to emerge into the full light of day until some fifteen years later.

Speaking of revolution, I am greatly struck today by the constant use of certain words in *Ni Marx, ni Jésus*—a veritable St Vitus's Dance around the notions of Revolution, Socialism, and Imperialism—that gives off a strong period odour. One has to agree to discuss things in the terms used by those one needs to convince. "Socialism" and "Revolution" then constituted the mental framework within which it was necessary to place oneself in order to get through to the intelligentsia.

THE SAME is true, I think, of my opening remarks to *La tentation totalitaire*. This is a kind of Socratic inquiry in which I attempted to bring the socialist or "liberal" reader—"liberal" in the American sense, which is to say the opposite of what the word means in France—to see for himself that to achieve the objectives he cares about he must remain within *le capitalisme démocratique*. My aim was to lead him to the knowledge that only liberal capitalism, in conjunction with a democratic political régime, realises certain ideals of which socialists have been dreaming since the 19th century. In order to do that I began by telling the socialist reader that I share his values (which is partly true), and I went on to show him that they cannot be realised by the methods usually termed "socialist". I sought to steer him towards the conclusion that the best way of "realising socialism" is by scrupulously avoiding it. As a matter of fact, since losing power in March 1986, the French socialists have come close to sharing this conviction. . . . The same goes for Revolution. It was necessary to ask all the youngsters who at the time swore by nothing but the notion: "Let's have a revolution." Yes, but how? Precisely by not having one. At that point I tried to show how most revolutions have in fact been regressions. I introduced the idea that the very need to have a revolution in fact represents a failure. A society cannot be replaced from top to bottom by another society in the space of a few years. Moreover, civilisations that are worthy of the name do not need revolutions in order to renew themselves.

SO WE COME BACK to the idea that I was expounding at the beginning, namely that the non-totalitarian sector of the globe is today the only sector to show proof of the ability to progress towards well-being and the extension of the democratic system. Consequently the supreme question of our time is indeed that of the struggle between totalitarianism and democracy, and the chances of either of the two opposing systems eliminating the other. That is the subject I addressed in *Comment les démocraties finissent*—about which I have said many times, and will say again here: it is an account of a policy not to be followed and not (at least, I hope not) a forecast of the shape of things to come. It is indeed fervently to be hoped that *How Democracies Perish* will not one day have to be retitled "How the Democracies Finally Perished".

Speaking of French . . .

EVEN IN ARGUMENTS about language, we French seem to be incapable of thinking other than in terms of diametrical opposites: black or white, reactionary or evolutionary, all or nothing. To hold that there is a process by which a language can and may deteriorate is to risk having the linguists immediately shove one into the quasi-neurotic category of *puristes*. The word occurs no fewer than five times in the first eight pages of Claude Hagège's book, *Le français et les siècles*—three of them within ten lines. The linguist, we read, is "neither a purist nor the guarantor of a culture"; he is not a "zealous purist", though he may condescend to "take on board the whims of the purists". Hagège makes no secret of his contempt for the "touchy vigilance of the purists" or for "purist rejection".

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Let us be a little more *nuancés*. The purist is one who opposes every innovation simply because it is an innovation. The attitude is clearly indefensible. It assumes that a language can be frozen for ever in what is considered—by what criteria, may one ask?—to be a state of perfection. But what strikes me as equally indefensible is the attitude of wholesale acceptance that consists in greeting every innovation with preconceived approval—again for no other reason than that it is something new and that "all languages evolve". Of course all languages evolve, but evolution can be either positive or negative in character. Certainly not every change is for the worse, which is where the purists go wrong. But neither does every change necessarily represent progress, and that gives the lie to the "zealous" linguists—or rather to a narrowly positivist and scientistic conception of linguistics.

Claude Hagège rightly reminds us that, for the linguist, "language is an object of knowledge".[1] Consequently he wants to see it studied as it evolves, without that reality being coloured by value-judgments. The reader can have no hesitation in endorsing a position that is no more and no less than scientific. But that is just the point: the linguist must not then abandon that position on the sly and make surreptitious value-judgments, insinuating that all changes are positive. The author speaks of the continuous (and not always discerning) "defence" of the French language: against Italian in the 16th century, against dialects and *patois*, against the English of 18th-century England, long before today's battle against American English. Yet the struggle against foreign incursions is not the only one, nor, probably, the most important, since borrowing is a quasi-permanent fact of linguistic life. The entirely "home-grown" decay of syntax in contemporary French, particularly as used in the Paris media, is a bigger worry to the "zealous purists" than what are often short-lived Americanisms.

In every age and every culture, thought is given to the quality of language, to good and bad usage, to what is beautiful and what is ugly, to the proper and the improper, the correct and the incorrect, the clear and the obscure, the well and the not so well expressed. This ceaseless critical commentary to which the users of a language subject their tool of communication *is also a fact*—and one that linguists ought to incorporate in their object of study. For it is also found in language areas that, far from being under threat, enjoy supremacy. In his *New York Times* column on the English language and its transatlantic innovations, William Safire shows himself to be as concerned a "purist" as any Francophone militant seeing the enemy at work everywhere.

In short, the history of every language needs to be seen in two lights: one positive and one normative (and the normative attitude and its practical repercussions also need to be taken into consideration, scientifically speaking). After all, languages would almost certainly evolve in the same way without such normative criticism. The duality of norm and fact, the possible and the real, the better and the worse, is inherent in the very structure of man's awareness, of which language is the supreme locus of deployment. In fact, it *is* that awareness, which without its internal tension would not exist. Nor would language. Any linguistic undertaking that considers a language purely as a datum and not at the same time as an intention is missing half its object. Just as important as what a person says is what he or she means to say.

Although we need to isolate it and, as it were, "neutralise" it in order to make it scientific, language is in fact inextricably bound up with culture. Françoise Thom's book, *La langue de bois*[2] provides us with an illustration both brilliant and profound, amusing and appalling, of the influence of culture on language—or rather, in this case, the influence of ideology, since what we have here is a demonstration of how the notorious "wooden language" ("*la langue de bois*") of the Communists emerged.

As a student of Slavonic languages, the author traces the process mainly in Russian and Polish, but the many examples she cites from other languages reveal an astonishing uniformity in the way ideology affects linguistic expression. In this language—Orwell's "Newspeak"—words become detached from things, and those who use words seek through their discourse to force things to be other than they are. This sterilisation of experience leads language to have systematic recourse to syntactical, lexical, and stylistic abstractions.

One of the most devastating of these is "substantivisation" or the misuse of nouns, which are less concrete than verbs in that they make it easier to avoid specifying who does what. For example, Henri Barbusse wrote in his *Staline* (1935):

> "*Au XIX^e^ siècle, par décision et éclairement des situations, l'humanité agissante s'est divisée en deux parties.*"
>
> ("In the 19th century, through decision and illumination of situations, the active portion of mankind divided into two.")

Or take this beginning of a sentence, lifted at random from the French Communist newspaper *L'Humanité*:

> "*C'est par le développement d'une large activité dans les masses que les conditions se créeront pour l'élaboration. . . .*

Literally:

> "It is through the development of widespread activity among the masses that the conditions will be created for the working-out. . . ."

A further characteristic of such language is over-indulgence in passive and impersonal constructions: "*Il s'est fait sur cette voie une belle avancée constructive* (A fine, constructive advance has been made along these lines)"; "*Des voeux furent exprimés pour l'augmentation des rythmes* (Desires were expressed for rates to be speeded up)"; "*Une attention particulièrement grande fut accordée aux bilans* (Particular attention was paid to the balances)". And so on.

[1] *Le français et les siècles*. By Claude Hagège. Editions Odile Jacob.

[2] *La langue de bois*. By Françoise Thom. Commentaire-Julliard.

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One does not have to look far to see that these bad habits have begun to affect contemporary French beyond the ideological circle within which they first arose. We French have a tendency to prefer the passive to the active voice, and the string of nouns to the verb. We rely too heavily on impersonal constructions, that is to say on sentences that, having no proper subject, make it possible to avoid nominating a definite agent, as it were.

Will this development continue? I do not know. Can it be counteracted? I hope so. The fact remains that a cultural or ideological cause of non-linguistic origin is clearly capable of having actual linguistic effects.[3]

This is why Claude Hagège argues skilfully and most persuasively that, as the 16th-century French poet Joachim du Bellay suggested in his manifesto for the new poetry of the Pléiade group, *Défense et illustration de la langue française*, that the "defence" of the French language cannot be separated from the process of "rendering it illustrious". No language—and that includes French—possesses intrinsic, eternal qualities giving it a natural superiority over all others. And the clarity that has traditionally been attributed to the French language stems very much more from the vigilance of its users than from any intrinsically luminous essence. A language lives by the culture it expresses.

J.-F.R.

[3] In the summer I spotted this notice in a village: "*Il a été procédé à titre non onéreux à la multiplication des points terminaux d'acheminement municipal de l'eau dans le cadre des activités camping.*" On inquiring what it meant, I was told that the council had put in extra taps to provide campers with free running water.

A Book, an Author, a Message

Gorbachov as Thinker—By MICHEL HELLER

DOES THE publication of Gorbachov's book[1] abroad represent a break with Soviet tradition?

MICHEL HELLER: No, Brezhnev's books were launched and published in the same way. What is more important is the book's significance in terms of power in the Soviet Union. For a General-Secretary to qualify as "inspired", on the way (as Boris Souvarine put it) to becoming the "genius of the Party", he must have made his mark as a writer. This is an ideological necessity; for the Soviet system is a logocracy in which the word possesses extraordinary power. Ever since Lenin, with some 55 volumes to his name, all General-Secretaries have been "writers". Now it is Gorbachov's turn. Three collections of his speeches were published last summer, but he wanted to be the author of a real book.

—Is this a real book?

HELLER: No, it is a collage of everything Gorbachov has already said in his speeches. To pep it up a bit, the team that worked on the book also put in the conversations Gorbachov has had with the Soviet people and with visiting foreigners. There is a lot of repetition, although this is deliberate. Gorbachov doesn't have many ideas, but he wants them to be understood by his readers, so he repeats them. The whole style, too, is based on repetition: for it is the style Stalin made famous, the style of the catechism.

What we have here, basically, is a message—an encyclical, addressed *urbi et orbi*. The subtitle is *The New Thinking for Our Century and the World*. In 1935 Henri Barbusse wrote a book about Stalin with a similar subtitle: *A New World through One Man*. The resemblance is disturbing.

—What is this "new thinking"?

HELLER: It consists in seeing the world as an entity in which differences of country and system of government do not really matter. It is also a plea for the Soviet Union to be seen as an integral part of that world. Gorbachov begins by showing us the situation in the USSR, and what makes this interesting is that he fails to reach a conclusion about whether or not there is a crisis in his country. On the one hand he maintains that there is, and he describes it; on the other he states that it is not serious, having to do not "with Socialism" but with errors on the part of the old leadership.

—Do you find his criticism far-reaching?

HELLER: Less so than in many of his speeches. But the thing is, his criticism only touches the surface because it only addresses "faults" in the administrative system and "mistakes" from the top. It is these defects, according to him, that

MICHEL HELLER *is a Russian historian who lives in Paris (where he was interviewed by Kosta Christitch of "Le Point"). Heller is the author of, among other works, a history of the USSR (written together with Aleksandr Nekrich) entitled "Utopia in Power" (Hutchinson, 1987) and "Cogs in the Soviet Wheel" (Collins Harvill, 1987).*

[1] *Perestroika: The New Thinking for Our Century and the World.* By MIKHAIL GORBACHOV. Collins, £12.95; Harper & Row, $19.95.

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have led to the erosion of ideological and moral values among the populace. And although he speaks of the guiding role of the Party and recommends that it be strengthened, he never talks about ideology, which is the foundation-stone of the Soviet economy. All-out centralisation, planning, and labour are ideological factors in the USSR. And what does he suggest? "Interdependence of democratic centralism and autonomy." In a nutshell, he wants to yoke together two radically opposing ideas—both the offspring of old ideology.

—He also speaks of "revolution".

HELLER: Yes, *Perestroika* (he says) is "the most peaceful revolution, the most democratic of all revolutions". Putting it forward as a continuation of the October Revolution, he explains it as a revolution ordered from above and sustained by the base. This is the opposite of Lenin's description of all revolutions, which break out when those "above" are no longer able to govern and the "base" no longer wishes to be governed.

But Gorbachov also agrees that politics is the art of the possible. One is irresistibly reminded at this point of the Stalin of the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Bukharin referred to him as the "*grand dosateur*". Stalin was indeed a master of the art of gauging force, cunning, kindness, and brutality.

—What is Gorbachov's fundamental message?

HELLER: When talking about the history of the USSR (which he assesses positively on the whole), Gorbachov highlights two events in his book: the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany (March 1918) and Lenin's adoption of the NEP or New Economic Policy (March 1921). In his speech of 2 November 1987 he added a third: the Stalin-Hitler pact (1939).

Through these three events Lenin and Stalin sought to gain time. That is Gorbachov's real message—though it is more implicit than explicit. The USSR needs a "breathing-space" and must therefore take a step backwards. It must come to terms with imperialism. In 1921 Lenin wrote in a note to his Minister of Foreign Affairs:

> **"A revolution never develops along a straight line, expanding continuously. It forms a series of explosions and setbacks, thrusts followed by pauses during which the revolutionary forces must make themselves more powerful in preparation for final victory."**

And he added in effect: the capitalist world, which is always on the lookout for fresh markets, will be lured by our proposals and will become deaf, dumb, and blind. Through *Perestroika* the USSR is looking for a pause in which to gather its strength, get rid of everything that is impracticable at home, and above all to obtain the economic assistance of the West.

—He foretells three difficult years for the USSR. . . .

HELLER: Yes, he does; and over that period he is counting on the Russian people, to whom he paid such homage in his speech of 2 November as had not been heard since Stalin's day. He said that he thanked "the great Russian people for its selflessness, its internationalism, and its enormous labour in shaping, developing, and strengthening the union of free and equal peoples. . . ." Stalin spoke of the "endurance" of the Russian people; Gorbachov is relying on that endurance to tackle the difficult years ahead.

WILL THE FORTHCOMING *celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the Christianisation of Russia be directed towards that end? And is the policy designed to nourish the West's illusions?*

HELLER: Obviously. If you compare present-day writing about the USSR—now a nuclear superpower—with that of 1920-21, the resemblance is extraordinary. At that time people were writing that the Soviet Union had abandoned the revolution and was on its way to becoming a country like any other. Gorbachov stresses the point: the USSR *is* a country like any other. But at the same time he adds that it is a little different from the others. In his speech of 2 November he was more explicit about what makes it different:

> **"Socialism is a far more developed way of organising society than capitalism. And Communism is not only the goal but the essential stage in the development of mankind."**

My Way

I know the difference between right and wrong,
I learnt about it at my mother's knee
and all the good belonged of right to her
and all the bad, I knew, was left to me.

Hers the white innocnce behind the veil,
the calm blue passage on the roughest sea,
the rose-pink silence and the golden hymn
and hers the comfort of forgiving me.

Mine the red glow of anger, steely tongued,
boredom, green jealousy and black despair,
hatred and envy, pale dreams, purple rage,
the wicked pain of not forgiving her.

I went my way. I knew my way was wrong
and so I feel it every blasted day.
She didn't give me any other choice.
I couldn't leave her any other way.

Dorothy Nimmo

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Arvind Krishna Mehrotra

Summer Notes

I

Mother in front, with shopping bag
And umbrella; I in the middle;
Behind me a bespectacled
Grandfatherly hodman carrying
A light load of bricks. The air
Was clear as a bell that morning.
Back at my desk, night's events—
Moon, jackfruit-tree, homing swallow—
Overtaking the window, hourglass sand
The hour, I fell asleep. Our days
filled with insubstantial things,
We dream to make up for lost time.

II

Evening, a book in my hand,
Feet crossed on a plank of light
Slanting through the door,
In the northern sky a cloud
About the size of Ireland looks down.

One by one lines darken
On the unread page and early stars
Appear to take sides: going in,
A phrase singing in my head,
A light rain of rhythms surrounds me.

III

Empty lorries pass us and a bored
Holiday-maker waves from a bus.
Turning into a sidestreet we're enclosed
In an ex-brigadier's garden
Where behind tall hedges and under
A parrotless sky dwarf mango-trees
Carry on all fours full grown
Fruit. Walking back past inconspicuous
Grocers' shops, our own lives
Seeming blessed with retirement, a new
Bustle in the evening air: the sight
Of common birds in exuberant flight.

IV

There's a world so they may seek advantage.
Tumours, lyings-in, disorders of the skin,
Jobs and killings: the conversation
Of the unfailably married gathered round
A tea wagon. A deaf-mute, a servant's daughter,
Hops on the grass where a mongrel
Yawns; parked cars inch forward
In receding light. "How did the shaddock-tree die?"
I ask. A rockery where faded zinnias grow
Forces its trunk and crumbly leaves
Hang at long intervals from
Mortified branches; the ivy
That lashed it from base to crown sinking
Petioles into the bark, rises in victorious tier
On an adjoining wall. "The last fruit
Was its sweetest", someone says at the gate
As we leave our hosts, the hooded ivy, the poisoned
Quarry, the animal kingdom of plants.

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A Special Book Section

Literature & Criticism

The Word & the World

Literary Theory, Critical Practice—By ANDREW SHELLEY

IF LITERARY THEORY was just another approach to the subject, it would not lead to major disruptions within university English departments. The questions it raises concern, rather, the nature of literature and the literary. Literary academics, claim the theorists, too often take it for granted that they know what they are talking about. But it is not enough to "appreciate" literature, however eloquently; one must be able to say what it is, especially if one earns a living by teaching it. Understandably, the traditional literary critics are furious at being informed that the subject they have been teaching all their lives may not even exist.

Literary theory takes the initial form of an attempt to treat literature as "language". According to the late Paul de Man, in *The Resistance to Theory*:[1]

> "The advent of theory . . . occurs with the introduction of linguistic terminology in the metalanguage about literature."

The project of healing the rift between literary and non-literary language challenges the idea of literature as a discrete, esoteric language in itself. De Man only obliquely addresses that wider enterprise of which, as posed by Gerald Graff in *Professing Literature*,[2] the linguistic project forms part: "to repair the disabling dislocation of literature 'from other cultural and social practices'." (The internal quotation is from Terry Eagleton, the Marxist vandal who pretends to be a cultural repair-man.) In other words, what is the value of studying what the best have known and said if it entails being deaf to the cry of what the rest have suffered? But the organicist metaphor of "dislocation", with its implication that all the limbs of the body politic should naturally articulate together, indicates that the reparative enterprise is ultimately directed at a still more fundamental estrangement—between the university and the rest of the world. For one of the emphases of literary theory is upon opening up the silent recesses of the academy to the voices of "the rest". Naturally, this is also one of the major sources of the academic resistance.

This, however, is not Paul de Man's concern. Imperiously, he dismisses the whole debate between theorists and anti-theorists:

> ". . . the arguments in favour of literary theory are so compelling that it seems useless to concern oneself with the conflict at all."

The real resistance to theory, he considers, originates in language itself; specifically in "the rhetorical or tropological dimension of language"—such as puns, metaphor, etc. Such opaque features of language set up a "resistance to the use of language about language" as if there were a snug conjugacy between word and world. The rhetorical or figurative properties of language force us to recognise that:

> ". . . it is not *a priori* certain that language functions according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world. It is therefore not *a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language."

Nor, de Man implies, is it *a priori* certain that academics are not merely reiterating their own prejudices and fetishes when they imagine that they are talking about literature.

Despite his dismissal of the polemical debate, de Man's arguments are best understood when situated within it. For the point of calling attention to the opacity of the relation between language and the world is that transparency has been too often wishfully conceived, allowing academics to "move so easily from literature to its apparent prolongations in the spheres of self-knowledge, of religion, and of politics". Because appreciation of "aesthetic values", not grounded in "actual perception" of "linguistic structures", is the mere "chit-chat of evaluation", de Man in his second essay demands "The Return to Philology" or "to an examination of

[1] *The Resistance to Theory*. By PAUL DE MAN. Manchester University Press, £27.50, paper £7.50.

[2] *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. By GERALD GRAFF. University of Chicago Press, $24.95, £19.95.

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the structure of language prior to the meaning it produces".

His faith in the pedagogical value of analysing "the structure of language" seems difficult to reconcile with the thesis of his preceding essay, which proclaims that any such analysis is necessarily inadequate:

> ". . . the grammatical decoding of a text leaves a residue of indetermination which has to be, but cannot be, resolved by grammatical means, however extensively conceived."

By "a text" de Man means *all* texts, not just literary ones: the image is that of "texts" being in some sense problems which must be solved, or obdurate precipitates which must be somehow *dis*solved.

Literary theory is at the same time enabled and disabled by the resistance it encounters. That irreducible residue provides theory with a wall to run its head against ("has to be, but cannot be . . ."). When theory encounters resistance, this guarantees that its subject matter is not, as it were, a matter of the subject; it is "out there" and not "in here". But this grist to the theoretical mill also ensures that theory will never reach any conclusions, except "the universal theory of the impossibility of theory". Thus theoreticians can go on endlessly cranking the handle of "the wordy-gurdy", to adopt a phrase of Samuel Beckett's, who long ago warned that "the danger is in the neatness of identifications".

The upshot of de Man's cogitations is that ". . . nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory *is* itself this resistance". This, it seems to me, could easily become the basis for a "compelling" argument in literary theory's *dis*favour. Once the gulf between language and the world has been acknowledged, how can it be bridged? A return to philology, or to an examination of the gulf, would seem not to overcome but to entrench the "dislocation" of academic disciplines "from other cultural and social practices".

INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE to theory is the subject of *Professing Literature*, Gerald Graff's well-researched, often entertaining history. De Man advocates "an examination of the structure of language", which is to examine the diremption between it and the structure of the "phenomenal world". Graff envisages an examination of the organisation of the *university*; specifically, an interrogation of the principles governing divisions between disciplines. The field-coverage principle, he claims, turns the university into an aggregate of specialisms, each unaware of its relation to the others. This proliferation of "dislocations" fosters the isolation of the university from the outside world. The very adaptability of the institution—its capacity to absorb new intellectual developments which challenge its basic premise—makes it recalcitrant when faced with real change. New departmental cells are added *ad infinitum*, while the overall structure of the hive remains unexamined.

What "disables" Graff's thesis is the "dislocation" between his diagnosis and his proposed cure. His excellent account of the "successive oppositions" that have enlivened literary studies since its earliest days ("classicists vs. modern-language scholars; research investigators vs. generalists; histori-

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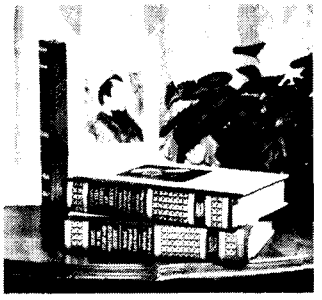

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cal scholars vs. critics", etc.) places the current debate in context. But this dark history of academic squabbles reveals a tint of "the utopian rainbow" in his final vision of resolution, with "the participation of dissenters, radicals and traditionalists alike" in the joint project of talking frankly about the disparities between their critical procedures. (Strange that this historian of oppositions fails to see a possible oxymoronic clash between the words "participation" and "dissenters".)

Graff's, it should be remembered, is a history of the problems which have beset literary studies in America, not in Europe. The solution too is characteristically American—to discuss "how we all relate to each other". But he fails to establish a point of view from which "dissenters, radicals and traditionalists" are "alike", evincing a naive faith that problems can be solved simply by laying them bare on the seminar table.

To demonstrate, however skilfully, that conflict between critics and theorists has always gone on in one form or another is to raise doubts as to its ever ceasing—and thus to call into question the explanatory power of any historical treatment of an hereditary condition. Graff's meticulously assembled evidence points to a conclusion which he fails to draw: that the conflict runs deeper than its various institutional configurations, which would seem to support some such view as de Man's—that the "dislocation" of literature "from other cultural and social practices" is as fundamental as the dislocation of language from reality. To know what the problem is, then, is to be aware that it can never be solved; and to examine this "dislocation", at the institutional level as at the linguistic, is not to repair but to underwrite it.

The theorists' programme of redemption for wayward universities and their insulated disciplines includes the "Marxian" mission to "rehistoricise" literature, or to "inscribe" it within history (a metaphor favoured by the theorists because of its insistence on the historical materials of writing). For them, literature is not the repository of immutable experiential truths; it does not encapsulate the life-blood of master-spirits, but is constituted by our changing conception and practice of it. In converting literature to history, "a work of art" is rechristened "a cultural artefact" or even "a cultural object", for the totemic power of those cult objects, literary works, must be "demystified". Novels, plays, and poems become "texts", and are no longer distinguishable from bus-tickets and shopping-lists. Hence the meaning of a work can no longer be referred to a single stable source, such as an author, because the meanings which language generates autonomously lie outside the control of any initiating consciousness. It is therefore impossible to recover an author's intentions, because the only evidence of them—the "text"—admits of an indefinite number of interpretations.

The word "interpretation" itself, in begging for the word "of", begs the question whether texts have any interpretable existence distinct from that which critics are able to assign them. It is therefore replaced by the sleekly intransitive "hermeneutics".

But if texts and their deposed authors cannot be invoked to legislate between competing interpretations, who can? How can we re-establish evaluative criteria once we have ruled out of court any appeal to "the author" or even to "the text itself"—except by appealing to the critic? The concept of authorship had, not least, the advantage of delegating authority to a party who was not able to exercise it institutionally.

THOMAS DOCHERTY, in *On Modern Authority*,[3] speaks of parcelling out authority among "those from whom it has been appropriated . . . active, historically constructive and critically conscious readers". They sound suspiciously like critics. Time and again, Docherty tacitly opposes the activity of "critical reading" to the passivity of non-critical reading:

> "The principle of authorisation for the meaning of a text . . . is . . . to be located in the activity of critical reading."

This is an act performed upon the essentially passive body of the text, for ". . . there can be no 'innocent' knowledge of authorial intention".

Docherty has high hopes for the resultant progeny:

> "The meanings produced in this case will not be those of an anterior imperialist kind of author, whose intentions and authorial stance are legitimised in an act of 'mediumistic' reading, but will rather be informed by the intentions of the reader, involved in a practical, historical, secular activity of exercising critical consciousness."

The meanings produced by Docherty are certainly not recognisably those of the authors he discusses, nor of any other "kind of author". They bear the stamp of Docherty. Their aggressive idiosyncrasy arises from the presumption that ". . . it seems incumbent upon the critic to adopt . . . an 'oppositional' stance to the literary text" in order to effect "a dialogic dissemination of authority" from author to reader. Docherty legitimates his critical "activity" by garbing it in the language of political action.

A further tactic of obfuscation, which Docherty and others like him consistently deploy, is to elide "readers" and "professional readers". It is incumbent upon professional readers to keep churning out "critical meanings"—for the simple reason that their "practical, historical, secular" (that is, *professional*) situation demands it of them. It is incumbent upon these critics, and not upon ordinary readers, to adopt an "oppositional" attitude towards each other, in order to establish and preside over their respective incumbencies, which—within the walls of that anti-pragmatic, unhistorical, sacred institution, the university—are more aptly to be thought of as *re*cumbencies. "A chair" requires an "oppositional stance" (rather than a sit-in).

By using "reading" to designate the active production of "critical meanings", critics such as Docherty relegate the ordinary reader to the status of mere passive consumer of authorial meanings determined by prior critical consensus. That consensus, they claim, has been established by authority and not by the active exercise of "critical consciousness"; the gesture by which they arrogate authority to themselves is

[3] *On Modern Authority*. By THOMAS DOCHERTY. Harvester Press, £25.00, paper £9.95.

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presented as anti-authoritarian and "oppositional". "Oppositional", however, means not only "opposing something" but "depending on an opposition between two terms". Docherty is oblivious of the opposition between these two senses (dependency/antagonism) of "oppositional".

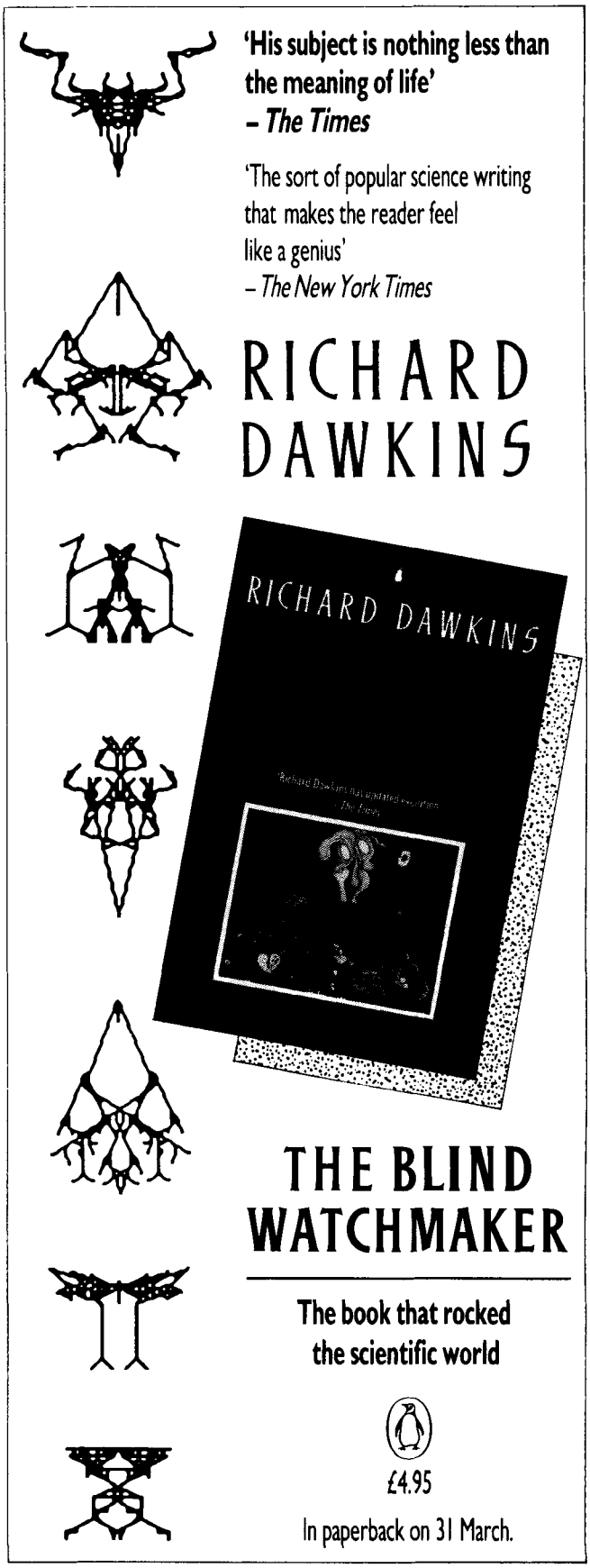
HE IS SIMILARLY unaware of how, in defying a presumed interpretative consensus, he depends upon it to validate his own "readings" as new and original. Unsuspecting that it is only by opposing it that he can suppose himself to be a literary critic, he is also unaware of the interdependency of terms which he treats throughout as flatly contradictory: male/female, active/passive, public/private. In one alarming passage, Docherty speaks approvingly of "an order based upon bastardy, promiscuity", and "the free flow of female blood", opposing such a "public life" to the "private values" of "the 'home'", shrine of "individuated and privatised identity". Docherty fails to be troubled by a contradiction, at the level of definitions, between "order" and "bastardy, promiscuity". Where there is a contradiction he sees none; and where he sees one, as between the public and the private, there is a symbiosis, a mutual dependency. Abolish the private, and the public disappears as well. (Docherty, one hopes, did not mean to imply that we should all behave like those who actually go into "public life" and put the words "bastardy" and "promiscuity" in the headlines.) Jacques Derrida could have told him that the difference between opposed terms is inscribed in each of them, so that one can't do without the other. But despite quoting him amply, Docherty seems ignorant of Derrida's most famous tenet.

With a literary man's faith in the power of analogies, Docherty makes a feeble political claim for at all costs opposing any critical consensus. "Such a mode of criticism . . . works not to arrest the possibility of raising a dissenting voice in the socio-political consensus". Perhaps what he meant to say is that it raises the possibility of being arrested, if it advocates "bastardy, promiscuity" and "the free flow of female blood". What is remarkable is the absence of dissenting voices from Docherty's prose, which marches forward in a series of blanket statements and is averse to being momentarily arrested by nuances or qualifications—those "dialogic" features of language. As a result, his "readings" lack real authority, for literary authority, unlike "socio-political" power, is established not by excluding dissenting, antiphonal voices, but by adjusting itself contrapuntally to as many of them as it can admit.

"LA MORT DE L'AUTEUR" is the occasion for Malcolm Bradbury's Arthurian quest for the mythical Henri Mensonge, author of *La Fornication comme acte culturel*.[4] "The significance of the non-significance" of M. Mensonge, according to M. Bradbury, is to have drawn attention to the illogicality of Deconstruction:

> "If the author was dead, it was still necessary to have a Deconstructionist author who could explain this to us."

[4] *Mensonge*. By MALCOLM BRADBURY. André Deutsch, £5.95.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Barthes lived up to the death of the author by being run over by a laundry van in 1980. Mensonge out-Barthes Barthes by not existing in the first place. As he says (the "translation" is Bradbury's):

> "You must understand that the 'fact' of my existence would negate what my text *as text* is saying."

Mensonge's non-existence makes him the most important figure in de-, pre-, and post-structuralist thought, claims Bradbury.

Docherty would doubtless agree, for Mensonge's absent presence, or present absence, allows a direct "dissemination of authority" to Mensonge's readers, who thus become his authors. Bradbury offers an illuminating summary of some exceedingly difficult passages in *La Fornication*, whose main thesis is that the whole of human thought, in postulating "an illusory metaphysical vagina", is based upon "a phallusy". He also presents us with a fascinating insight into the origin of Cubism—that it occurred when Picasso resolved to paint Gertrude Stein's portrait—and a revisionist reinterpretation of Marx, "who showed how history worked, if we followed the instructions properly".

BRADBURY'S STUDY came out too late to be of benefit to the contributors to *Postmodernism and Politics*.[5] Like Docherty, they are much preoccupied with oppositions, and—according to Jonathan Arac, their editor—they are also committed to overcoming "the bar between culture and politics". Often they do no more than sit at it, and attempt to find themselves politically responsible. They agree with de Man that old-hat literary wafflers have been guilty of "premature foreclosure—the unseemly rush from word to world" (a rush which is forestalled by punning: "unseemly"; "seamless"; "too beguiled by seeming appearances"; "semen"). In citing this diagnosis of Jonathan Culler's, Mary Louise Pratt ("Interpretive Strategies/Strategic Interpretations: On Anglo-American Reader-Response Criticism") adds that it is a condition which "can ruin your text life". However, at a highly premature moment—in the very first sentence of Jonathan Arac's introduction to the volume—word and world are involuntarily and prematurely "foreclosed".

> "In the two decades since it first consciously began to define itself, postmodern criticism has chosen to be worldy."

Perhaps by "worldy" Arac meant to suggest that the more worldly postmodernist criticism tries to be, the more wordily self-absorbed it becomes. But one hesitates to say this—the concept of authorial intention having been abolished. Nevertheless, I would guess that this word, with which Arac describes how "postmodern criticism" has "consciously . . . chosen . . . to define itself", has not been "consciously" "chosen".

After this embarrassment, it is only natural that the rest of the volume should consist mostly of apologies—by Bruce Robbins for John Berger's idealisation of "peasant experience", by John Higgins for the late Raymond Williams's "radical empiricism", by Cornel West for Frederic Jameson's "Marxist hermeneutics", and even for Ezra Pound's anti-Semitism, which Andrew Parker ("Ezra Pound and the 'Economy' of Anti-Semitism") sees as ultimately "the product of the structural incapacity of any form of discourse to master fully its own rhetorical mode". When Pound fulminated against the Jews, he was, it seems, really raving at the tendency of the sign to drift free of the referent. The Jews, being a nomadic race, were naturally taken as symbols of this wandering of words from things. But writing is "characterised by" this "'nomadic' play of rhetoric". And Pound, being a writer, was therefore also a Jew. After all, "Ezra" is the name of a Jewish scribe in the Bible. It is therefore best to regard Pound's anti-Semitism "as an oblique confirmation of Pound's irreducible Jewishness". The essay was not intended to rehabilitate Pound: but, in illustrating the "nomadic" tendency of Parker's mind, it vindicates Pound's comparative sanity. This is the only essay in the book which can claim to directly engage an issue which straddles the boundary between culture and politics; it serves as an exemplary instance of postmodernist criticism's habit of reducing the live issues of those domains to static, "irreducible" questions of language.

MUCH OF *Postmodernism and Politics* is given over to attempts to define postmodernism. Brian McHale, in his useful handbook, *Postmodernist Fiction*,[6] offers a simple rule-of-thumb. Modernism is concerned with epistemological issues; post-modernism with ontological issues. Matei Calinescu, in the chapter "On Postmodernism" added to a new edition of his stodgy but informative study, *Five Faces of Modernity*,[7] has words to say about this:

> "Is modernism . . . a distinct moment in an irreversible sequence or . . . an essential urge of all (authentic) literature at all times? . . . Is postmodernism . . . a distinct moment in such a sequence or a recurrent possibility given within the inner logic of a transhistorical modernism?"

The value of McHale's loose theoretical framework is that it can be easily discarded, allowing him to make successful overtures to Carlos Fuentes, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon, Jorge Luis Borges, and even Samuel Beckett (though without preventing him from looking uncomfortable in such company).

McHale's knowledge sometimes lapses, perhaps because epistemological issues have all been transformed into ontological ones. The "famous visual paradox" of the duck/rabbit is attributed to Ernst Gombrich. But it is impossible to see it as belonging to Gombrich and to Wittgenstein at the same time. McHale is careful to acknowledge that he lifted the pun real/reel "from a radio-play by the comedy group Firesign Theatre, *Don't Crush That Dwarf, Hand Me the*

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[5] *Postmodernism and Politics*. Edited by JONATHAN ARAC. Manchester University Press, £8.95.

[6] *Postmodernist Fiction*. By BRIAN MCHALE. Methuen, £25.00, paper £7.95.

[7] *Five Faces of Modernity*. By MATEI CALINESCU. Duke University Press, $39.95, paper $14.95.

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Pliers (1970)"—but he should know, for future editions, that *they* pinched it from Jean-Luc Godard.

It was a good idea of Imre Salusinszky's to go and chat to nine prominent literary critics, thus really putting "criticism in society".[8] We learn that Barbara Johnson, the resident deconstructionist at Harvard, has a dog named Nietzsche; that J. Hillis Miller does not have the use of both arms; and we are offered such memorable quotes as, "I like teaching at Duke and making the salary I make". A good idea, nevertheless, at a time when critics are beginning to lapse into monologue and do not seem even to possess the common vocabulary needed to vilify each other.

Members of opposing literary camps, the badge-wearers and the pipe-smokers, consistently abuse each other at cross-purposes. One example was provided in 1983 by John Bayley (Warton Professor of English Literature at Oxford and a venerable bastion of the Literary Establishment), reviewing Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* in *The Times Literary Supplement*:

> "Most of the theories Eagleton expounds may soon seem outlandish curiosities, cooked up by teachers who need to feel professional, in the sense that philosophers or scientists do, or powerful, like politicians."

Some find it an "outlandish curiosity" that academics' security of tenure protects them from "the need to feel professional". Academics find it "outlandish" that they should be called upon to justify themselves to the rest of society when they are traditionally the justifiers. So John Bayley pushes the word "politicians" with tremulous fingertips to the very edge of his review of a book in which the word "politics" has an almost occult power.

For Bayley, "politics" and "professional" are terms of abuse; for Eagleton, they are terms of praise. Perhaps it is the instability of the contested terms, or some de Manian split between language and the world, which will prevent the debate from ever being resolved.

[8] *Criticism in Society*. Interviews by IMRE SALUSINSZKY with JACQUES DERRIDA, NORTHROP FRYE, HAROLD BLOOM, GEOFFREY HARTMAN, FRANK KERMODE, EDWARD SAID, BARBARA JOHNSON, FRANK LENTRICCHIA, J. HILLIS MILLER. Methuen, £5.95.

Geographical Expressions

Recent Italian Writing—By IAN THOMSON

FOR ANGLO-SAXONS, the Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia is still rather an unknown quantity. Go into any Paris bookshop, however, and there they are—row upon row of Sciascia novels, keeping alphabetical company with Sartre and Stendhal. But then Sciascia has always looked to France as a second home: Voltaire hovers like a tutelary spirit over his almost every written word—not surprisingly so, because Sciascia's stories are really polemical essays masquerading, like *Candide*, as fiction.

In Sicily, of course, Sciascia is irrefutably a household name: people in the strangest of places have heard of him. Recently, I spent the night in an Albanian colony perched on a hill above Palermo. Talking to a priest in one of the six Greek Orthodox churches there, I was surprised to hear him discourse learnedly on Sciascia. He complimented the writer on his public stance against the Mafia, and criticised him for his lack of any ties with the Vatican.

"All the same, one divines a sense of something vaguely religious in Sciascia, no?—a moral vocation that, though secular, comes close to the Christian."

A quality, this, which by his own admission Sciascia shares with Pier Paolo Pasolini. While professing a sometimes quite virulent loathing for the Catholic Church, both these Left-wing writers indulge an almost Tolstoyan pity for the downtrodden, the dispossessed masses of the Italian South—Pasolini in those novels and poems which celebrate the hardships of life in the unsung slums of Rome; Sciascia in the several complicated, not to say metaphysical, thrillers which he has set in the Sicilian town where he was born: Racalmuto, a ramshackle, sulphur-mining village in the province of Agrigento, not very far from Pirandello's birthplace.

Both Pasolini and Sciascia, then, are Socialists with a confessedly "Christian" humility. And one can see why the Sicilian writer so admires Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Dedicated to John XXIII, the first Pope to open up the discourse between Catholicism and Marxism, the film is an apparently "secular" celebration of the New Testament—as indeed the absence of the word "saint" before "Matthew" is meant to suggest.

But, most decidedly, the two writers have their differences. In *The Moro Affair*,[1] Sciascia's judicial enquiry—half who-dunnit, half essay—into the kidnapping and murder in March 1978 of the Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades, we read:

"Brotherly and remote Pasolini was to me. A brotherli-

[1] *The Moro Affair and The Mystery of Majorana*. By LEONARDO SCIASCIA. Translated by SACHA RABINOVITCH. Carcanet, £9.95.

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> ness without familiarity, guarded and, I think, full of mutual intolerances. . . . One could compile a small dictionary of the things he described as adorable in his writings and which for me were then simply distressing and are now terrible."

What sort of things, one wonders, would make up this "*piccolo dizionario*"? Foremost, I suspect, would be those apparently "manly" codes of behaviour, such as honour and "*omertà*" (derived from the Sicilian "*omu*", meaning "man") which Pasolini, as a homosexual, so admired in the young boys of the Roman slums. To Sciascia such codes seem merely the repugnant characteristics of a distinctly *mafioso* behaviour—particularly "*omertà*", which has come to mean the code of silence through which the Mafia ensures invulnerability from the law. *Omertà* was, broadly speaking, the theme of the book for which Sciascia is now renowned—*The Day of the Owl* (1961), the first novel about the *Cosa Nostra* in the history of Italian literature.

Pasolini was possessed of a wide-eyed romanticism quite alien to the sceptical and eminently "reasonable" Sciascia—a writer who has often praised "*la sensibilità, la vivacità, la luminosità*" of 18th-century France. An active member of Italy's distinctly maverick Radical Party, Sciascia prefers to sit on the parliamentary benches, away from the general fray of things; Pasolini immersed himself in the lives of his beloved outcasts—crooks, spivs, pimps and racketeers—until he became the victim, like so many romantics, of living in the fictitious instead of the everyday. His assassin, a rent boy known, *à la* Damon Runyon, as "Joey the Toad", was from exactly the same social background as Ricetto, the brutal young hero of his first Roman novel, *Ragazzi di Vita* (1955).

As WITH ALL the more important Italian writers of the post-War period (Alberto Moravia, Italo Calvino, Primo Levi, Natalia Ginzburg), Sciascia and his "*fraterno*" Pasolini share an intense loathing of the right-of-centre Christian Democrat Party. In one of the numerous polemics which Pasolini published in the *Corriere della Sera*, he accused Demochristians of "betraying the true faith of humanism", of "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof".

As Enzo Siciliano makes clear in his excellent biography,[2] Pasolini was a revolutionary romantic who actually went so far as to blame the Christian Democrats (sometimes referred to in Italy as "the Party of Corruption") for turning a semi-rural and apparently idyllic Italy into a tawdry land of American-induced consumerism. In the summer of 1975, Pasolini had demanded that the Demochristian leaders be put "on trial"—a "penal trial, in a courtroom", from which the defendants would emerge "handcuffed between *carabinieri*".

Hardly surprising, then, that in the weeks following Aldo Moro's kidnapping public opinion recalled what Pasolini had said—especially as the terrorists had themselves spoken of the "*processo*", or trial of Moro. But at the end of his political day, Pasolini had scant time for middle-class revolutionaries; indeed, he had foreseen the terrible birth of the Red Brigades in 1968, when he wrote:

> "So many Catholics, in becoming Communists, bring with them Faith and Hope, while neglecting, without even realising it, Charity. And this is how fascism of the Left is born."

IN LEONARDO SCIASCIA'S books, the Christian Democrat Party is associated less with Pasolini's dreaded "*consumismo*" than with the *Cosa Nostra*. Pasolini wrote in his epic poem "The Religion of My Time" (1961) that "the Church is the merciless heart of the State"; Sciascia seeks in a thriller like *One Way or Another*[3] to expose the time-honoured links between Christian Democracy, international finance, and the Mafia.

Well and good—but any writing which carries a local political message (and Sciascia's irrefutably does) may condemn itself to eventual oblivion. Italy is a changed—a *very* changed—country; and the Italy which Sciascia depicts (overrun by crooked financiers in the Roberto Calvi and Michele Sindona mould, by trigger-happy Red Brigades and *Cosa Nostra* entrepreneurs) now appears a little out of date. True, we have had the recent Vatican banking scandal involving the wheeler-dealing Archbishop Marcinkus, the Holy See's chief treasurer. But terrorism in Italy has been all but quashed, and the *Cosa Nostra* was dealt a severe blow by the Palermo "maxi-trial", which brought to book some 400 suspected *mafiosi*—the first time that the Mafia has been trapped under the legislative net of the Italian State.

Sciascia's *The Day of the Owl* is now seriously out-of-date as well: the Mafia which he portrays in this hard-boiled detective novel is as it used to be—a rural phenomenon with interests in loan-sharking and protection rackets. Today, the "honoured society" peddles most profitably in heroin—a product for which there is an absolutely ideal structure of supply and demand. Times have changed indeed, and Sciascia would be the first to admit as much.

After the recent deaths of Italo Calvino and Primo Levi, Sciascia is, I think, the most *interesting* of living Italian writers. (Alberto Moravia, who recently celebrated his eightieth birthday, remains drearily faithful to his literary triumvirate of sex, money, and the dread demon boredom.) Moreover, he writes extremely well—a spare and sinewy prose which is indeed reminiscent of Voltaire and the *Encyclopédistes*. *One Way or Another* is a most engaging read, its outdatedness notwithstanding, and the plot manages to gallop along, though it unfolds in only one location. . . .

The setting is a thoroughly unwholesome "spiritual retreat", somewhere in Western Sicily, a place teeming with "Demochristian" Ministers, Deputies, company chairmen, bank-managers and industrialists, all of whom are keen to expiate their *mafioso* sins through prayer and meditation. Presiding over this "nest of vipers" is one Don Gaetano, an irredeemably cynical priest who contemplates the foulness of his bed-hopping, wine-guzzling clients with peculiarly exul-

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[2] *Pasolini*. By ENZO SICILIANO. Translated by JOHN SHEPLEY. Introduction by PAUL BAILEY. Bloomsbury, £20.00.

[3] *One Way or Another*. By LEONARDO SCIASCIA. Translated by SACHA RABINOVITCH. Carcanet, £10.95.

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tant relish. Confronted by the spectacle of sinners kneeling in prayer, the narrator, a famous painter and amateur author of detective novels, is reminded irresistibly of the thieves' pit in Dante's *Inferno*.

Soon enough, scandal strikes home in Don Gaetano's irreligious "Holiday Inn". One of his plutocratic guests is murdered; then another. A detective is called in, but, confronted by so impenetrable a wall of *omertà*, he hasn't a hope of solving the crimes. This is always the case with Sciascia's literary heroes: policemen, *carabinieri* and lawyers—honourable but impotent guardians of justice. Not that it very much matters "who killed Roger Ackroyd"; the Mafia have no qualms about rubbing out meddlesome rivals during the celebration of Mass, and the Church (as Sciascia sees it) will turn a blind eye as they do so.

Eventually, the heinous Don Gaetano is himself murdered. Whether he is the victim of a *Cosa Nostra* plot or of the fiercely aetheistic narrator is never made clear. Still, I was sorry to see him disappear; he is one of Sciascia's most splendid fictional creations, a lapsed priest to rival any number of Graham Greene's.

If one or two of Sciascia's books have not withstood the test of time very successfully, the same is, I think, true of Pasolini's two Roman novels—*Ragazzi di Vita* (1955) and *Una Vita Violenta* (1957.) Quite simply, these portray a Rome which no longer exists. The city-slums beloved of Pasolini—ramshackle shanty-towns built along railway lines or barnacled against the towering walls of the ancient aqueducts—were bulldozed in the early 1960s, during Italy's "*anni di boom*". In their place stand ugly tenement blocks—disfiguring the Roman skyline like so many enormous concrete dominoes. Most of them are inhabited by a new consumer-conscious class—lower-middle but with pretensions to middle—which sprang up more or less overnight with the sorry advent (as Pasolini saw it) of such "godless" toys as the television set and the washing-machine. Gone are Pasolini's joyous and unselfconscious peasants, exuberant characters with a devil-may-care attitude to material gain.

Pasolini, it must be said, was at heart a traditionalist: change in the social fabric of contemporary Italy sickened him quite literally unto death. (His assassin, a clue to whose identity was provided by the cheap, American-made ring which he left behind at the scene of the crime, was a product of Italy's new-found consumerist utopia.) Italo Calvino, whom Pasolini had described as "more Voltairean than homegrown", publicly accused this revolutionary romantic of an irrational nostalgia for a hypothetical golden age—an age which could have been represented, said Calvino, by "*l'Italietta*", the diminutive epithet used to disparage the Italy of the fascist period for its provinciality.

Were Pasolini alive today, it is doubtful whether he would have much of a theme. His beloved Roman dialect (the language of the poor which Pasolini thought was blessed by God and so incorporated into his writing) has largely disappeared. The poor of Rome (things are much worse down in Naples) no longer employ a rich and inventive speech spiced with

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Calabrian or Sicilian puns and proverbs, but rather a sort of "consumerist" esperanto, compounded of half-garbled transatlanticisms gleaned from pop songs and cop films. There are comparisons to be made, perhaps, with the disappearance, in London, of cockney rhyming-slang.

FEW CONTEMPORARY Italian writers have very obviously been influenced by Pasolini. Primo Levi, Alberto Moravia, and Natalia Ginzburg compose their books in a standard "literary" Italian, quite free of dialect or wordplay. The structure of Calvino's books may appear "experimental", but the prose is clean and straightforward. Aldo Busi, a young Italian who is currently being promoted as a writer so original as to be well-nigh *sui generis*, will occasionally bring Pasolini to mind, but his monstrously difficult novel *The Byzantine Dolphin* (1986) seems largely to have been written under the spell of Carlo Emilio Gadda, "the Italian James Joyce".

Primo Levi, whose suicide in the April of 1987 deprived Italian literature of its most refined and civil voice, was nevertheless interested in Pasolini's use of dialect. The two classic books which Levi wrote about his imprisonment in Auschwitz —*If This is a Man* (1947) and *The Truce* (1963)—are written in a deliberately plain and uncluttered Italian, but *The Wrench*,[4] an exuberant novel about the picaresque adventures of a constructor of oil-rigs, cranes, and suspension bridges, is in many ways a characteristically individual contribution to the great tradition of Italian regional and dialect literature: whole parts of the book were written in Piedmontese dialect.

Other than that, though, Levi and Pasolini were as writers poles apart. Levi once described as "ill-considered" Pasolini's belief that the only historical precedent to the "consumer boom" which so shook Italy during the early 1960s was the economic state of affairs in Germany prior to Hitler's ascendancy. And I can imagine that Levi, a reasonable man, would not have very much taken to Pasolini's dreadful *Salò* (1975), even if the film were all that Enzo Siciliano claims for it; namely, "a critical essay on the Nazi-fascist concentration-camp mentality as an instigator of violence"—a description that would perhaps be better applied to *If This is a Man*.

The most extraordinary thing about Levi, I think, was the way in which he related the horrors of Auschwitz with such calm, forgiving reasonableness. The concentration camp, for him, was not an isolated instance of human infamy, but an extreme metaphor for society as a whole—for how we live together out here, beyond the barbed-wire fence. His literary endeavour was almost socio-scientific; a detachment derived in part from his life-long career as a chemist—breaking up and reconstituting elements, and classifying them according to their molecular composition.

To the end, Levi had but one terrible theme: Auschwitz, the material and moral ruins of Europe. Always, in his writing, there is an element of incomprehension, of philosophical puzzlement—as in that extraordinary moment in *If This is a Man* where a fellow Auschwitz internee shows Levi the words carved at the bottom of his wooden bowl: "*Ne pas chercher à comprendre.*" But Levi, who was never out for revenge on his would-be murderers, wanted, above all, to *understand* them. How could a country which produced Beethoven, Schubert, Thomas Mann, Goethe, send some eight million Jews to their deaths? This was the question he tried to answer in his last book, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986). But it was one that, at the end of the dismal day, he was never to answer. Perhaps it was this incomprehension in the face of the unthinkable that, as it seems, finally compelled Levi to take his life.

The Wrench is not the book for which Levi will be remembered: compared to *If This is a Man*, or the remarkable *The Periodic Table* (1975)—a collection of partly-autobiographical tales structured around elements of Mendelev's chemical table—this novel is a light and breezy affair. Reading about the hero Tino Faussone's tales of rigging and construction—how the suspension cables of a bridge he had built in India began, in high winds, to hum with something like music; how he nearly drowned in the course of making a motorway in Calabria—one has the erroneous and happy impression that Levi's ghastly tale had finally been exorcised. Indeed, the only remotely grim detail in *The Wrench* occurs when Faussone, an engagingly boastful fellow who owes a good deal to Levi's beloved Rabelais, tells us that the word "derrick" derives from one Mr Derrick, a 17th-century hangman credited with inventing a new-fangled gallows whose trestled form resembled an early 20th-century crane. *The Wrench* is full of many such fascinating details—a delightful book by a delightful man now sadly departed.

ONE OF THE little-known, though admittedly gossipy, facts of contemporary Italian literature is the good-natured envy which Italo Calvino bore Primo Levi: Calvino, who was fascinated by molecular biology and astrophysics, resented Levi's professional grounding in science. Calvino wrote numerous science-fiction stories ("cosmicomical fantasies", he called them),[5] but always felt that, as the product of a writer who entertained an imaginative rather than a *realistic* response to science, they were somehow fraudulent. Strange, then, that Levi's efforts at writing science-fiction are far inferior to Calvino's; his two volumes of "sf" fantasies—*Storie Naturali* (1966) and *Vizio di Forma* (1971) have not so far found an English translator. Perhaps this is just as well: Levi believed that these books had long ago suffered the fate of second-rate science-fiction, which is to "undergo a rapid ageing process".

Some of the best science-fiction ever to come out of Italy was written by a man who, like Calvino, had no professional grounding in science: Dino Buzzati, who for 40 years worked as a journalist in Milan on the *Corriere della Sera*.

Buzzati can claim, I think, to have written one of the most original of 20th-century Italian novels—*The Tartar Steppe* (1945), a surreal story about one Giovanni Drogo, a lieu-

[4] *The Wrench*. By PRIMO LEVI. Translated by WILLIAM WEAVER. Michael Joseph, £9.95.

[5] *Cosmi-Comics. Time and the Hunter*. By ITALO CALVINO. Translated by WILLIAM WEAVER. Abacus, £3.99, £3.50 respectively.

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tenant waiting at a bleak frontier outpost for a non-existent attack. The novel is set against a distinctly northern Italian background of forbidding forests and imposing mountain-ranges—scenery which lends an air of the eldritch to several of the 23 stories in his latest collection, *Restless Nights*.[6] It was on the reputation of *The Tartar Steppe* (not, it must be said, very obviously a work of science-fiction) that Buzzati earned for himself the entirely appropriate title "the Italian Kafka". Not for Buzzati Pasolini's peasant communities of the Italian centre-south; one of these stories, "The Walls of Anagoor", is set in Tibet.

Like so many of Calvino's "cosmological fantasies", those of Buzzati can often be seen as a satire on man's indiscriminate and potentially destructive misuse of technological progress. "Appointment with Einstein", for instance, expresses fears provoked by the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the mid-1950s. But because this is Buzzati, fear takes disturbing shapes: out for a stroll one day, Einstein is approached, quite literally, by the Angel of Death. (The story is remarkably similar to one which Alberto Moravia wrote some 25 years later—"The Devil Can't Save the World", in which Einstein also meets a devil-like figure.)

Real-life figures such as de Gaulle, Elizabeth Taylor and Khrushchev often crop up in Buzzati's narratives; sometimes, indeed, these even read like newspaper stories. Take the opening paragraph of "The Scandal on Via Sesostri":

> "Professor Tullio Larosi, holder of the chair in gynaecology at the university and director of Santa Maria Immaculate Hospital (commonly known as the Maternity Hospital), died of a myocardial infarction at the age of sixty-nine. His death was an unsettling event for the tenants of the apartment house at Via Sesostri 5, of which he was proprietor."

As the story develops (all the more chilling for the straightforward way in which it is told), we find that the dead man is not in fact Larosi, but an impostor named Enzo Sirili, an Italian doctor who assumed Larosi's identity during the War in order to wipe out any trace of his connivance with the Nazis in their persecution of the Jews. Typically, "The Scandal on Via Sesostri" ends with the exposure of a whole group of impostors living under aliases in Larosi's apartment—a calculatedly anti-climactic pulling of the carpet from beneath the reader's feet. One cannot imagine Primo Levi writing such a tale. To bring even a degree of experimentation or fantasy to bear upon the Holocaust he would have regarded as faintly offensive, which is why he had little time for the impossibly hermetic poems of Paul Celan, despite their subject-matter.

Restless Nights is to be recommended; Buzzati's achievement is almost unprecedented in Italian literature, which has for the most part been rather "*casalingo*", rooted—like Pasolini's work—in domestic and national concerns.

In his autobiography, *Jackdaw Cake* (1985), Norman Lewis says he sometimes feels himself to be half-Italian. Certainly, he has written some wonderful books about Italy—the re-

[6] *Restless Nights*. By DINO BUZZATI. Translated by LAURENCE VENUTI. Carcanet, £4.95.

TEMENOS

A Review Devoted to the Arts of the Imagination

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markable *Naples '44* (1978), drawn from his experience as an Intelligence Officer in that ramshackle city during the War, being among the best. And to my mind he is the only English writer to have written a book which, for its lyrical description of a primitive culture hedged in by custom and sorrow, deserves to rank alongside Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. This is *Voices of the Old Sea* (1984), which tells of his three-year stay in a remote Catalonian fishing village.

LEWIS'S LATEST NOVEL, *The March of the Long Shadows*,[7] is set at the end of the War, in a barren Sicilian village: the narrator is a British Intelligence Officer caught up in the cause of Sicilian separatism. Lewis's prose, as splendid as ever, is often reminiscent of Graham Greene's: "He smiled apologetically with a display of teeth coloured by malnutrition like a matured meerschaum pipe."

By and large, Norman Lewis's travel-writing is superior to his novels, which for me lack enough of the true yeast of fiction. Perhaps this is because the background is all-pervasive: his people are only a part of it, or are simply there to provide the odd, quirky detail. But no other Englishman writes about the Italian south with quite such impressionistic brilliance: the Sicily he describes in *The March of the Long Shadows* is exactly that of Leonardo Sciascia:

> "The old, obsidian, basic Sicily where no questions were in any circumstances asked, where they didn't even play noisy card-games and no one had much to say, and there was a hush in the atmosphere that could almost be felt."

Whatever Norman Lewis's characters might lack in substance, they make up for in terms of eccentricity. Here we have an Archpriest "who believed God was a mathematician", and a museum-curator who habitually imbibes a malodorous beverage made of preserving-fluid, "to which he added Gentian by way of flavouring". Above all, there is Salvatore Giuliano, the glamorous "Robin Hood" who became the most famous Sicilian outlaw of all time (although, according to Leonardo Sciascia, who is always ready to puncture the official "truth" of things, Giuliano was "*un piccolo, triste personaggio; senza leggenda, senza mito*").

NORMAN LEWIS has chosen as an epigraph a markedly cheerful Sicilian expression: "*Finché c'é morte c'é speranza*", "Where there's death there's hope." This little dictum would have made an equally appropriate epigraph to a remarkable book by Salvatore Satta, an Italian writer whom I had hitherto never read.

The Day of Judgement[8] is a doomy and quite humourless book. This is not a criticism; there is scant room for levity when writing about 19th-century Nuoro, a town in the Sardinian hinterland which, in Satta's decidedly saturnine vision, was "nothing but a perch for the crows". Its poor citizens, too, may as well be carrion:

> ". . . close and taciturn, men and women alike, dressed in a severe costume that yields as little as possible to the allurement of colour, with an eye always on the lookout for defense and offense, immoderate in eating and drinking, intelligent and treacherous."

The translation, by Patrick Creagh, strikes me as nothing less than brilliant.

Critics in Italy have been comparing Satta's book to di Lampedusa's Sicilian classic, *The Leopard*. Both are historical novels, set towards the end of the 19th century, and both articulate vaguely similar emotions—nostalgia for an archaic, semi-feudal Italy, and a pessimistic and fatalistic resignation in the face of its disappearance. There the similarities end: Satta is more interested in portraying the stagnant immobility of a peasantry than in the decline of an aristocracy. *The Day of Judgement* is firmly in the naturalist tradition of D. H. Lawrence's beloved Verga.

Salvatore Satta, after the War, rewrote the Italian Penal Code, ridding it of its "fascist" aspects, so it is not surprising that Leonardo Sciascia—himself a quondam lawyer—should approvingly quote Satta in his latest book (*Porte Aperte*, 1987). As Sciascia does in so many of his works, Satta seeks in *The Day of Judgement* to come to terms with the Southern Italian's haughty disregard for the Italian State, for the government up there in Rome. The people of Sardinia, Satta is saying, are unable to understand the public domain, for the simple reason that they do not identify it with themselves: "Anyway, what is Justice?" asks Satta, parodying the Nuorese attitude to the laws of the State:

> "Justice is authority, the power someone else wields over someone else, and authority does not discuss matters: if it condemns you, you are condemned, and that's that. But for this reason it is also justice to escape from authority if possible, exactly as it is also justice to bump off a possible witness, if necessary."

In that one paragraph is encapsulated the *mafiosi* attitude to the Italian State—and, indeed, the *Cosa Nostra*'s *raison d'être*. (Sciascia describes the ordinary Sicilian's attitude to the State in *The Day of the Owl*: "a merely *de facto* entity based on force, an entity imposing taxes, military service, war, police.")

In *The Day of Judgement*, the State is vested in the single person of Don Sebastiano, Nuoro's chief notary. He is married to Donna Vincenza, a strong though sullen woman who cares nothing for the blinkered politics of her property-proud husband—she would rather rock herself into a state of forgetfulness in the wooden chair by the fire. Since we are in the Italian South, it is Donna Vincenza who presides over the seven sons she has had by Don Sebastiano: her husband has little control over anything save his legal clients.

The seven sons eventually take up arms in the First World War. Don Sebastiano is delighted: at last, he thinks, his children have moved off into a masculine world of which he has more understanding than his wife. But Donna Vincenza grows to detest her husband's failure to stop the "terrible dia-

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[7] *The March of the Long Shadows*. By NORMAN LEWIS. Secker & Warburg, £10.95.

[8] *The Day of Judgement*. By SALVATORE SATTA. Translated by PATRICK CREAGH. Collins Harvill, £10.95.

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spora" of her sons, and she moulders away in the kitchen, imprisoned in her rocking-chair by arthritis:

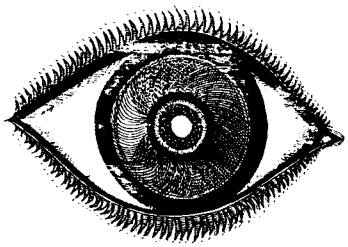
> ". . . alone, and sunk into the abyss of time, which was as motionless as herself, hanging over her comfortless figure like the grapes of the pergola, which her shortsighted eyes saw forming and growing every year, enormous stalactites in a lightless cavern."

Satta portrays every-day life in Nuoro, the peasant labours of its downtrodden people. And when (himself a Sardinian) he lovingly describes the picking and pressing of grapes, the baking of bread, the drainage of farmland, he is writing about Pasolini's beloved "*Italietta*". Satta has what Enzo Siciliano calls Pasolini's "religious respect for the sacredness of the human being attached to the soil", and sees in poverty a kind of *santità*. Pasolini would no doubt have enjoyed Satta's frequent use of Sardinian dialect, particularly those instances of *sardegnese* which somehow mingle the sacred and profane: "*Benitu siat s'acriore/frutt de puru binu*", "Blessed be the belch/fruit of pure wine."

The success in Italy of *The Day of Judgement* has been similar to that of *The Leopard*. And it deserves such acclaim.

Questions of Identity

Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot—By JOHN MOLE



EZRA POUND died in his sleep with one blue eye open, and I doubt if there can be a poet writing now who is not to some degree haunted or instructed by that solitary, implacable gaze. He died on the night of his birthday. In his end was the beginning of exegesis. The poem had swallowed its own notes, and the rest, which had been silence for several years, was already becoming the restlessness of interpretation. Guests came to his bedside, one by one, to sip champagne as he watched them, their muted homage dissolving into a wake. "I do not teach", Pound had once jotted in the margin of a manuscript, "I awake", and there's something monitory (not to say *monetary*) about the accidental coinage of this homographic pun. It counts the cost of its presumption.

Pound's long life as poet, messianic explainer and salvationist sage had been witness to the chaos of "a botched civilisation" but somewhere, as he put it, the mainspring had gone haywire and he had become implicated, the tragically defined image of that chaos. He had simplified it into a scenario of "good guys and shits" which crowded in on him with a vengeance, his own inscape from which there was no escape. Alone, living with and living out his story, Pound came to regard himself as a man "on whom the sun has gone down". Hell had been other people, and *for* other people (as T. S. Eliot remarked), until the flight from himself brought him to himself and to the hell of the Pisan cage.

Incarcerated for their helpless obsession, the shit and the good guy perpetuated this remarkable poet's quarrel with himself in magnificent fragments of encoded lyricism, a colloquy of remorse, recollection, intransigence and redemption, drawn from "fatigue deep as the grave". The most poignant moments of the *Pisan Cantos*, certainly Pound's greatest testament, achieve in the words of Eliot's *Litle Gidding*, a "condition of complete simplicity/(Costing not less than everything)". There is a profound, divested and unbookish recognition of the natural world which often seems to echo the words of the tragic king he has, in several ways, come to resemble: "I have ta'en too little care of this":

> *the poplar tips float in brightness*
> *only the stockade posts stand*
>
> *And now the ants seem to stagger*
> *as the dawn sun has trapped their shadows,*
> *this breath wholly covers the mountains*
> *it shines and divides*
> *it nourishes by its rectitude*
> *does no injury*
> *overstanding the earth it fills the nine fields*
> *to heaven*

Then the imperious silence—broken only by further fragmentary Cantos, recyclings of a method from which the energy appears to have gone.

"I did not enter silence. Silence captured me", said Pound the victim, as if coining his epitaph, but Pound the artist contrived to reverse the capture, making that silence the last, most splendidly enigmatic of his personae—the mask from which the one blue eye goes on staring at the legacy of his own confusion as the guests depart and the critics, apologists and biographers move in to celebrate the good guy and interrogate the shit, struggling to reconcile the pair of them. Birthday or Wake? Do we come to praise or bury this important, impossible monster, born of the sleep of his own reason or, as the novelist Katherine Anne Porter characterised him, this "complete, natural phenomenon of unreason"?

According to John Tytell in his well-researched and dizzily populated new biography *The Solitary Volcano*,[1] Jean

[1] *Ezra Pound: The Solitary Volcano*. By JOHN TYTELL. Bloomsbury, £17.95.

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Cocteau once told Pound that "the tact of audacity consists in knowing how far to go too far". By any count, Pound's own audacity was profoundly tactless, and strategically unrestrained. His early years in the artistic milieux of London and then Paris were single-mindedly devoted to making it, and making it new. His compulsion as a poet and promoter was to be one step ahead of everybody—quite literally. Although going on foot was, as Laurence Binyon had told him, an expression of the Confucian adage "slowness is beauty", Pound was in a hurry. He covered ten or fifteen miles a day, taking notes all the time, when following in the steps of his admired Provençal troubadours. In an amusing but revealing cameo passage from Tytell's book we learn that William Carlos Williams, for whom meeting Pound had been like the difference between B.C. and A.D., remembered that "Pound always walked a few steps ahead of him no matter what the pace and that his insistence on moving ahead first was a source of real annoyance".

Ford Madox Ford, too, exemplary to Pound in his novelistic mastery of shifting and intersecting personae (this became one of the key modernist techniques), also described the way he used his Malacca cane on the streets, characteristically approaching "with the steps of a dancer, making passes with his cane at an imaginary opponent". He took up fencing (his 1912 collection of poems was entitled *Ripostes*) and had boxing lessons from Hemingway. John Tytell neatly observes that these hyperactive symptoms reflected a heightened intensity, the desire to get on with his work, to quicken the process of building a poetic reputation.

Doubtless there was then, as always, a distinct element of self-interest in the noisy promotion of new talent. Making it new means making it in your own image, however subtle you are about ensuring that every protégé recognises his or her image as their own. Of course, Joyce and Eliot were their own men, but Tytell makes it clear that even what Pound saw as the conservative tone of Eliot's later criticism was, in his view, due to him:

> "I pointed out to him at the beginning that there was no use of two of us butting a stone wall; that he would never be as hefty a battering ram as I was, nor as explosive as Lewis, and that he had better try a more oceanic and fluid method of sapping the foundations."

As for Eliot himself, while famously grateful for Pound's legendary work on *The Waste Land*, he later commented that Pound regarded his protégés "almost impersonally, as art or literature machines to be carefully tended and oiled for the sake of potential output".

The engineering metaphor, here, is significant, envigorating in the short term and ominous in the long. Pound's own creative talent, bookish, crepuscular and aptly characterised by Tytell as "a mixture of Browning's bravado and Yeatsian fog", lagged behind that of Joyce and Eliot, and of Yeats himself who was busy dispelling his own fog under Pound's editorial guidance. According to Yeats:

> "To talk over a poem with him is like getting you to put a sentence into dialect. All becomes clear and natural. Yet in his own work he is very uncertain, often very bad though very interesting sometimes. He spoils himself by too many experiments and has more sound principles than taste."

Despite their musicality, modernist juxtapositions, their finely-honed savagery and civilised yawping of a "Whitman who had learned how to wear a collar and dress shirt", Pound's leanings were Romantic. Recognising this, his reformation of others intensified as an aspect of the drive to free his own poetry from the "emotional slither" he deplored in "the decayed lily verbiage" of the '90s poets and the Georgians. His ear was excellent (not least for mimicry) but there were still plenty of lilies strewn about his lines:

> *Thou hooded opal, thou eternal pearl,*
> *O thou dark secret with a shimmering floor,*
> *Through all thy various mood I know thee mine;*
> *If I have merged my soul, or utterly*
> *Am solved and bound in, through aught here on earth,*
> *There canst thou find me, O thou anxious thou,*
> *Who call'st about my gates for some lost me;*
> *I say my soul flowed back, became translucent.*
> *Search not my lips, O Love, let go my hands,*
> *This thing that moves as man is no more mortal.*

There were too many of the wrong ghosts in his machine, despite his acknowledgment that Ford was right in stressing that a poet should say "nothing, nothing, that you couldn't in some circumstances, in the stress of some emotion, *actually* say". So what came, I think, to possess Pound was the sheer force of his *will* to clarity. *Dichten = condensare* (the text of his *ABC of Reading*). Increasingly, as things fell apart in Europe and failed to measure up in literary circles, he thought in equations and expressed himself through edict:

> "As to twentieth-century poetry, and the poetry I expect to see written during the next decade or so, it will, I think, move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be . . . 'nearer the bone'. It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretative power. . . . I mean it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither."

This was 1911, and all those *wills* were then the bracing, programmatic authoritarianism of the heady and committed gatecrasher. In retrospect, however, they can be seen to anticipate the chilling remoteness of the self-absorbed obsessive for whom the ball-park of literature evolved, insidiously, into the stadium of Europe but remained a kind of private system, a compulsive enclosure of the self.

Place beside it, for example, this celebration of the emergent Mussolini:

> ". . . an OPPORTUNIST who is RIGHT, that is, has certain convictions and who drives them through circumstances, or batters and forms circumstances with them."

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ESSAYS ON THE FRENCH THEATRE FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT

edited by ALAN HOWE and RICHARD WALLER

Within the University of Liverpool's Department of French, a considerable amount of research has been conducted into aspects of the theatre from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Reflecting the increasing scholarly interest in a theatre long dominated by the towering reputations of Corneille, Molière and Racine, the eleven essays in this volume cover the period between the early Renaissance and the eve of the Revolution. The authors focus on the practicalities of theatre production as well as dramatic structure and technique, and on literary, social and cultural issues. Emphasis falls upon the richness and the variety of the drama of the period. But the individual essays (in English, with quotations in the original language) are also linked by several unifying strands, of which the most prominent is the common pursuit of experimentation and renewal, exemplifying the vitality to be found in the 'margins' of French Classicism.

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The author of this could be welcoming one of his new protégés. *Il Duce* is making it new, oiling the machine of state for potential output, getting it to run on time; a fellow artist with the will to power and the material to hand.

"Humanity", Pound once wrote, "is malleable mud, and the arts set the moulds it is later cast into." The second half of that statement is fair comment on the legacy of spontaneous, humane achievement, but the ruthless authoritarianism of the first half is the way nightmare lies. When Wyndham Lewis, who referred to Pound as "the daemon pantechnicon driver", made a sketch of him with a solid rectangle in place of the forehead, to signify what he felt was fanatical will-power, I find it hard to imagine that for all his own modernist drive he did not recognise the self-destructive tendency in Pound's brilliance; nor that, when Eliot expressed his uneasiness about the *Cantos*, feeling that they "could be made more humanitarian", he was not deluding himself and making a quite remarkable, self-evident understatement.

THERE IS, of course, a tragic grandeur, or at least a huge pathos, about Pound's later years, and there is no way to avoid reading his work in the light of it. His fate lends resonance to its lyricism, a respectful suspension of impatience when faced by its many esoteric ellipses and obscurities, and a symbolic enlargement to the follies. He remains a major 20th-century poet by force of circumstance; a magnificent, eloquent symptom determined by the signs he so seriously misread and embodied, unmistakably, in the very fabric of his art. The *Cantos*, which he described at their outset as a "chryselephantine poem of immeasurable length which will occupy me for the next four decades unless it becomes a bore", has occupied a critical territory to match its scholarship, a triumph of the will to make poetry ingest everything and shape the life of its creator. It will continue to be read, abandoned, and re-read with astonishment, and passages from it will be anthologised for the magnificence of their rhetoric and the sheer beauty of their cadences, but perhaps most of all for the extraordinary, restless changes that throw out immaculate lines from a welter of document:

I don't know how humanity stands it
with a painted paradise at the end of it
without a painted paradise at the end of it
the dwarf morning-glory twines round the grass blade
magna NUX animae with Barabbas and 2 thieves beside me,
the wards like a slave ship,
Mr Edwards, Hudson, Henry comes miseriae
Comites Kernes, Green and Tom Wilson
God's messenger Whiteside
and the guards op/of the . . .
was lower than that of the prisoners
"all them g.d. m.f. generals c.s. all of 'em fascists"
"fer a bag o' Dukes"
"the things I saye an' dooo"

Amongst the shorter poems, apart from the achievement of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* which has a scope and economy to match *The Waste Land*, there are many finely crafted pieces—the stoical temper of "The Seafarer", the ventriloquial military clamour of "Sestina: Altaforte", the depth of sympathetic insight in "Portrait d'une Femme", the metropolitan satire of "Moeurs Contemporaines". More than enough to proclaim a remarkable poet, but dominated by the will to be so—*voulu*, theatrical, making and remaking himself over and over but lacking the unifying poetic imagination of Yeats. John Tytell's absorbing biography gives us the documentation, throwing the patterns of a difficult life into clear relief, but the poems, as they must, provide the evidence. I still go to them, commanded by that blue eye which continues staring, willing me to read and be impressed.

You say that I take a good deal upon myself;
That I strut in the robes of assumption.

In a few years no one will remember the buffo,
No one will remember the trivial parts of me,
The comic detail will be absent.
As for you, you will rot in the earth,
And it is doubtful if even your manure will be rich enough

To keep grass
Over your grave.

IF POUND'S *alter ego* was the *buffo* in a European opera-hall, T. S. Eliot's might have been a ventriloquist on the end of an English pier with something a little creepy about his skill at throwing voices. It is fascinating to be caught by surprise when rereading him, to discover the mischief and teasing subversion at work—nervous, often close to desperation in the earlier poetry, and wily, knowing, in the later. Something of the same can be detected in the essays, too. Speaking immediately after Eliot's death, in a BBC *Radio Newsreel*, W. H. Auden had this to say:

> "In reading his criticism, some over-zealous admirers have been deceived by the solemn manner into taking every word he said seriously. In Eliot the critic, as in Eliot the man, there is a lot, to be sure, of a conscientious churchwarden, but there was also a twelve-year-old boy, who likes to surprise over-solemn wigs by offering them explosive cigars, or cushions which fart when sat upon."

But in his celebrated essay on Shakespeare's Iago, "The Joker in the Pack", Auden had previously written that "there is something slightly sinister about [the jokes of] every practical joker for they betray him as someone who likes to play God behind the scenes."

Sinister or not, it becomes an urgent necessity for Eliot, at least until the end of the 1920s, to manipulate all the stylistic devices at his disposal—echo effects, quotation, pastiche, collage—from backstage. When he does appear, in various vocal disguises, he's the supporting act—at most, occasionally, an attendant lord and if, at times, almost the fool, then *playing* the fool rather than—like Pound—grandly *acting* it. This, for me, marks Eliot's superiority to Pound as a modernist poet. His intense animation—the *pattern* of his nerves—informs every line; restless, brilliantly unsettled and unsettling, the serious joker in a pack of words. "I gotta use

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words when I talk to you." But who am I and who are you? And what, for that matter, is this discourse we call literature?

These questions, which I take to be the axioms of post-structuralist criticism, are at the centre of *The Poetics of Impersonality*, a truly illuminating, properly difficult study of Eliot and Pound by Maud Ellmann.[2] Setting out from the recognition that "for Pound and Eliot, poetry becomes the workshop of the self, where personal identity is both constructed and dismantled", she demonstrates through close analysis the validity of George Poulet's observation (which she quotes) "Chase away subjectivity, it returns at a gallop".

WITH CAREFUL ATTENTION to Henri Bergson's theories of duration to prove the continuity of personality (Eliot took detailed notes at Bergson's lectures in Paris in 1910-11), she moves, via a study of Eliot's uneasy on-off relationship with those theories and their relevance to the thinking behind "Tradition and the Individual Talent", into analysis of "The Death of St. Narcissus", "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", "Gerontion" and "The Waste Land", tracing the shifting masks and the personal identity they constitute. In her chapter on *Four Quartets*, after a humorous acknowledgment of the difficulty of applying her critical method—"In many ways, the *Four Quartets* set out to justify the ways of English vicars. . . . At moments, Eliot seems to be determined to turn poetry into one of the caring professions"—Maud Ellmann triumphantly rescues the poem from its perch in the pulpit and demonstrates the force that runs, as nervously as ever, through its circuit of reflection in a structure that resembles Bergson's model of remembrance. I finished this chapter recognising the intellectual brilliance behind the sonorities I have had off by heart since the Sixth Form:

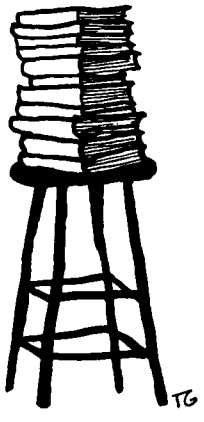
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

Beside this achieved humility, negotiating, as Maud Ellmann says, between "belief in the redemption of the past and the darker knowledge of its loss", and not sober-suited but "quick now, here, now, always" with an effortless coming to rest on *always* which dissolves personality into continuity, Pound's *Cantos* come to be seen as Maud Ellmann shows them to be: "Far from impersonal, this project is megalomaniacal."

[2] *The Poetics of Impersonality*. By MAUD ELLMANN. The Harvester Press, £29.95, paper £10.95.

Redeeming the Time

Recent Novels—By ALAN BROWNJOHN



IF YOU READ Scott Turow's new novel with the dust-jacket on, a small replica of the hard, accusing finger on the front continues to point at you from the outer edge of the flap. It seems to be saying (with some accuracy) that this book is intended to grip you with uncomfortable moral issues. The same could apply to Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, his first novel for twenty years, which urges readers in the West Africa of today (or anywhere at all) above all to know themselves; though here matters are not expounded plainly, in the same enthralling detail, but subtly refracted through the personal impressions of several participants who take turns in interpreting the course of events. Ian McEwan's latest, and easily best, novel is more indirect still, yet makes equal demands on the reader's commitment to the gravity of its theme, while never failing to excite and surprise. All in all (and Alan Brien's formidable and, I think, underestimated, *Lenin* cries out for inclusion in the bag), it has been a season for those who like their fiction to be stern and entertaining at the same time.

The Child in Time? McEwan's title tempts guesses and theories.[1] Kate, the missing child in the novel, is sealed in a patch of past time as in aspic. Children (but we are all children in this respect) are time's slaves. To the main character, Stephen Lewis, whose daughter Kate is, a child does indeed come, in time, though he has much to endure before it happens. Stephen has deep conversations on the nature of time itself with Thelma, the scientist wife of his former publisher, Charles Darke, and he is hardly better than a child in his understanding of the latest research. Charles has gone back in time, to reinhabit his childhood. The variations are numerous and ingenious, and the way McEwan allows his plot to start so

[1] *The Child in Time*. By IAN MCEWAN. Cape, £10.95.

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many metaphysical hares is something of a pity; because the novel is saying so many true things about what late 20th-century Britain is doing to both children and adults, in an often moving and occasionally darkly funny way, that these philosophical excursions should not have been allowed to fog the issue.

STEPHEN'S KATE disappears one morning in a supermarket, and the event turns a real world of shopping, work, love-making and child-rearing into a nightmare world of loss which destroys Stephen's marriage to Julie. For others, existence in this convincing 1990s Britain is already a nightmare, in which centralised bureaucratic control is set to lay down fixed rules for bringing up children in the best patriotic interests of home and nation, and individual liberty includes the freedom to wear the badge of a licensed beggar. Stephen's committee work, as a distinguished children's author, on the Official Commission on Childcare, is leading to the production of *The Authorized Childcare Handbook*, portentous extracts from which head every chapter of *The Child in Time*; but he is distracted by the harrowing recollectios of his vanished daughter, his separation from Julie, and the bizarre reversion to boyhood habits of Charles Darke, who has forsaken both prosperity in publishing and preferment in politics to live in a self-built tree-house.

Ian McEwan's construction of the social fabric of a controlled and impoverished Britain ten years hence is an absorbing feat of prediction. There are other *tours de force* embedded in the narrative: a road accident which modulates from slow horror through relief into something approaching farce; a compelling climb into Charles's tree-top fastness; and a visit to Stephen's flat by the Prime Minister which transforms it temporarily into the seat of government.

This last occasion, like all the occasions on which the novel ventures into the corridors (or the machinery) of power in a Britain where autocracy presides over a deadening blend of masochism and chaos, is brilliantly set up. It makes a point which has generally been missed: Charles the born-again boy and the Prime Minister (sex and name are not given, but that scarcely matters) need each other, in an authoritarian parent-child relationship which has sexual overtones, and thus symbolise tendencies which have brought the nation to this condition. After the sardonic impudence of this idea ("You might think it extraordinary and perverse that I should form an attachment to a young man", the Prime Minister tells Stephen), I find the affirmative ending of *The Child in Time*, with its message of rebirth, too straight-faced to believe.

THE SPRING, summer and fall of a recent year are the time-span of Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent*,[2] which is set in Kindle County, a Middle Western conurbation big enough to evoke Chicago. In the spring, Carolyn Polhemus, a forty-ish, very beautiful lawyer in the Prosecuting Attorney's office, is found bound, raped and murdered in her own flat. At the time of the crime, the PA, Raymond Horgan, is in the middle of a primary election, which he loses partly because the mystery is too deep for a rapid solution to seem possible before Kindle County goes to the polls. Through the summer, Rusty Sabich—Horgan's deputy—who appears to have been unduly slow in his investigation of the crime, is arraigned for murder, prosecuted by his boss's victorious primary opponent, Nico Della Guardia, and defended by Alejandro Stern, the most impressive defence lawyer Sabich has ever done battle with in his professional life. The judge, Larren Lyttle, is a black with a bias towards anyone who might just have been wrongly accused ("the defence lawyer's dream"); but the evidence against Sabich in this sensational trial could be damning. By the fall, with the hearing over, there are only the last, and most surprising, knots in this elaborate tangle left to be unravelled.

The story is told by Rusty Sabich, whom the author presents in a cloak of apparent candour which actually reveals very little: Sabich is contriving to leave his own guilt or innocence an open question for the reader while unfolding a tale in which the motives and ambitions of others are slowly and searchingly exposed. Not only has Sabich been in love with the dead Carolyn ("CHIEF PROSECUTOR CHARGED WITH MURDER—HAD AFFAIR WITH VICTIM"), but so, in the past, have the primary loser, Horgan, and Judge Lyttle; and Della Guardia's blundering assistant on the prosecution bench would have liked to have had an affair with her. Almost every character has some personal, professional, or political interest in the outcome of the case, and it is Scott Turow's skill in making this state of affairs credible that turns *Presumed*

[2] *Presumed Innocent*. By SCOTT TUROW. Bloomsbury, £12.95.

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Innocent into something much more than an absorbingly well-documented crime novel.

Not only are the courtroom scenes (and the intervals in which the two sides jostle each other, and manoeuvre for openings and advantages, in the corridors and washrooms) astonishing for their authenticity and cliff-hanging suspense. Turow also reaches out into the lawyers' offices, police stations, forensic laboratories and election-campaign head-quarters of the city to present a comprehensive overview of a community in which corruption and moral compromise infect every judicial and political process; public life here has the look of an incurable disease. There is to be (how could there not?) a film of *Presumed Innocent*. It ought to be better than an accomplished sexual whodunnit, with star courtroom parts for famous faces. If it isn't, or even if it is, the fans should go to the novel itself to pick up the finely chilling detail of Mr Turow's study of Kindle County, and ponder his message.

CHINUA ACHEBE'S *Anthills of the Savannah*[3] opens with an episode set in a Cabinet meeting in the young West African republic of Kangan, as observed by Chris Oriko, who is Commissioner for Information. The atmosphere is one of uneasily jovial sycophancy. The President (an old schoolfellow of Chris), whose Ministers are mostly long-term civilian colleagues, is no Amin or Bokassa, but rational and intelligent. All the same, the Cabinet knows his powers and his ruthlessness, knows also that when a protesting deputation (from the one large province which has not approved his presidency-for-life in a referendum) arrives in the courtyard, the situation is potentially dangerous for all of them. It is most dangerous for another school companion of the President, the poet Ikem Osodi, who edits the *National Gazette* with outspoken courage, and sympathises with the protesters.

Sam (the President), Chris, and Ikem represent three distinct levels in this society: the one from which dictatorial power is dispensed from palaces in the city and the hills, with the support of bigshots in limousines and the secret police in the State Research Council; the level on which Chris receives and mediates the information which is fit for the Kangan public to receive; and the one on which Ikem the poet enshrines the spirit of his country in his writings, and openly stands up for his people against the dictator with a humanistic, commonsense message which they find difficult to grasp and learn. There is another important character, Beatrice Nwanyibuife, a civil servant and Chris's lover, who is learning to understand the new Kangan by taking heed of the myths and rituals from which her London University education (a First in English Literature) has separated her.

These four people interpret and explain Kangan for us through a group of impressionistic testimonies which focus on the central incident of the novel: the failed rebellion which almost coincidentally destroys all of them except Beatrice, and the subsequent coup which sets up a faceless figure in place of Sam. This coup, and *any* coup, is celebrated with singing and dancing in the villages, simply as a change; another way of hinting that tragedy of a political or personal nature is not going to make much impression, for a long time yet, on these anthills of deprivation.

This is a poet's novel without being a poetic one. Achebe understandably makes the poet Ikem the moral centre of the book, the strongest character, and the one with the clearest perceptions of the way things are going in Kangan. He knows this kind of figure better than the others; and yet his account of the shifting currents of political life and the people they bring into prominence or power (displaying themselves at a fascinating and frightening dinner party at the President's country resort) rings compellingly true.

The characters shift from one linguistic register to another, from London University English to demotic Kangan pidgin, as if to make the point that this nation has not yet collectively settled for one identity. To move from the offices and homes where the intelligentsia speak an English of their own, to the city and village streets where the citizens operate according to quite another code, is to be aware of the huge gaps in understanding which still require to be bridged. Achebe's novel, tense, earthy, lyrical, and ultimately hopeful, is a distinguished contribution to the process.

THE FAMOUS of history deserve to receive the scrutiny of the novelist, but they have rarely fitted comfortably into historical novels unless they are enigmatic figures whose characters beg to be made the subject of inventive explanations. Victor Ilyich Ulyanov, also known as Lenin, obviously suffers, in one way, from not being allowed to be puzzling enough: the father of a successful revolution has to remain bold and simple in outline. If you do not like him, or his revolution, there is another, quite different, problem: he has to remain a crank, or a savage mediocrity with power to stir the masses, which means that his personal character must be boring. Undaunted by these obstacles, Alan Brien in *Lenin: The Novel*[4] has set out to give us "The Man" and "The Events" through the medium of "The Diaries". I think he brings it off with admirable panache.

Lenin could not have been straight history, which would be superfluous; and neither could these "diaries" have been an essay in self-scrutiny, which would not have been particularly convincing in someone with so little apparent self-doubt. Brien manages to pitch his 700 packed pages somewhere between the two, providing enough introspection to explain Lenin's motives for becoming a revolutionary, and enough action to carry us at a goodish pace through events in Russia from the time his hero's father dies in 1886 to his own death in 1924.

There are various conventions to accept: that at the time of his most strenuous activity, Lenin also had time to enter long diary accounts; that the document went with him safely for 40 years, never mislaid or damaged; and that he could still contrive to dictate or indite crucial passages during his final illnesses. But this sort of demand on the reader's willingness to suspend disbelief ought to present no problems. Brien's

[3] *Anthills of the Savannah*. By CHINUA ACHEBE. Heinemann, £10.95.

[4] *Lenin: The Novel*. By ALAN BRIEN. Secker & Warburg, £11.95.

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achievement (no doubt the result of huge research, and arduous processes of selection and arrangement) is to persuade us that, if Lenin had wanted to keep a diary, and had been capable of writing this one, *these* are the things he would have wanted us to read, with *these* emphases and no others, when it was opened to the world.

So Lenin here *is* the subject of an explanation: Brien's Victor Ilyich is the plotter and leader for whom physical action in the cause of revolution (he is a fitness fanatic, and needs to be) is the only adrenalin-producer. Filial loyalties, the Russian landscape, Shakespeare, and women all move him, but none of them so much as tough and dangerous activity. (His remedy for women comrades who look sickly is to send them out immediately on some energetic Party task.)

This is a novel about what it is to be hyperactive in a cause, to a degree where danger, bereavement, painful exile and brutal discomfort do not matter. Lenin's brother is executed for plotting to overthrow the Czar, but that must not cause Victor Ilyich to fail his school exams. Half-identified by hostile forces in a Petersburg street, he can summon the physical will to turn coolly aside and urinate in a doorway, correctly assuming that the enemy will not be suspicious of someone behaving in this indifferently unattractive manner. He can endure weeks in hiding in Finnish lakeland, sharing a bed of hay-blocks with the enormous Zinoviev and living off dreadful cabbage and potato stew, as long as he can console himself with thoughts of the next action in the class war. The novel reads as a convincing self-portrait of the kind of man Lenin must have been like to manage what he did. The background of Russian pre- and post-Revolution society looks real enough to this Western reader; but it would be good to know what Russian readers make of it. That may be hard to find out for a while yet, since *Lenin: The Novel* shows Lev Davidovich Trotsky in a distinctly sympathetic light.

In *Blackeyes*,[5] the lovely Jessica hates her Uncle Maurice, an ageing and faded novelist who has unexpectedly produced a smart, up-to-date novel about the world of advertising models. Why? Maurice James Kingsley seems an engaging old failure, at seventy-seven sleeping and scrounging through the last days of his life in the seedy bedsitter where he still goes to bed with his teddy bear, and fending off the encroachments of a world where untidy young men want to interview and photograph him for the likes of *Kritz* magazine. But Maurice, whose literary career had apparently subsided into inanition with products like *Occasional Pieces Again* (1953), is nastier than he seems, and Jessica more determined to destroy him than appears reasonable.

A suicide is taking place, in interspersed camera shots, in this novel by Denis Potter; and a fiction within a fiction is unfolding: the book Maurice has written by drawing on Jessica's knowledge of the life of a model. The latter is the best part of *Blackeyes*; Maurice (or Potter) has a sharp eye for the sleazy detail of the scenes where his inscrutable heroine parades before a clutch of entranced businessmen planning a TV commercial, and captivates them by tantalisingly refusing to play their game.

The mystery element in the novel, which encloses the extracts from Maurice's narrative, is adroitly handled, but ultimately proves rather insubstantial—was this small and revolting surprise really all that the novel was holding back? Blackeyes herself deserved better, and admirers of the author's *Singing Detective* would have expected something both more extraordinary and more alarming.

Her Story[6] is feigned to have been written by a woman who lived and died in the early part of the 21st century, and published for its human and historical interest three centuries later. Dan Jacobson puts the introduction to the publication of this manuscript in the hands of an amateur historian, who explains that its author, Celia Dinan, had a conventional upper-class education, wrote a thesis on the Madonna in 15th-century Flemish art, fell out with her father, and became the lover of Eric Hirn, an American fanatic who spoke in tongues. Hirn's master work, *The Hidden Voices*, was published with a tape consisting only of "screams, growls, howls, groans, grunts, coos, sobs, whoops, hisses, sighs, snarls, cackles, squeaks, screeches, yelps, bellowing and bayings". He believed that people could learn to speak with the Voice of God if they deconstricted their own voices: he was a "deconstrictionist".

All this, in an introduction lasting for just under one-third of the novel, is highly promising. What will Celia's lost manuscript, carefully written in eleven small W. H. Smith notebooks, tell us? The answer is: very little. Dan Jacobson inexplicably delivers a mouse of a mystery, a short, slow, biblical allegory couched in unworthily dreary prose and lacking altogether the shock of brilliant revelation promised by his blurb. "Anyone could have been you", writes Celia about the unnamed protagonist in her tale. The attempt in *Her Story* to make "her" interesting enough to engage our speculation and sympathy (even our curiosity) has fallen tediously wide of the mark.

What is implied by a "companion", in the domestic setting? For Chaim Bermant's narrator in his new novel,[7] companions are servants who "either aren't paid at all, or so little that it almost comes to the same thing". Phyllis, thin and fifty, is one such, companion to the florid and truculent widow Martha and her two lapdogs, all creatures who have seen much more affluent days. Together they live in the heatable parts of the end house in a provincial Georgian terrace where every other residence has been converted into an office or a down-at-heel private hotel. They hate and abuse each other, and are utterly necessary to each other's existence—a joint fortification against an incomprehensibly changing world.

Bermant has a fine, wry sense of how people may live by repeated small rituals which summon up a spirit of hope. In the case of Phyllis and Martha, hope lasts almost undimmed

[5] *Blackeyes*. By Dennis Potter. Faber, £8.95.
[6] *Her Story*. By Dan Jacobson. André Deutsch. £8.95.
[7] *The Companion*. By Chaim Bermant. Robson Books, £10.95.

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until the remaining old friends are dead, the annual trip to Frinton has become too physically demanding or just too expensive, a beloved department store closes, and light and warmth ebb away from the house where the mistress is dying among the unpaid bills. The situation is pathetic, and potentially harrowing—and also dreadfully comic. The humour might have been cruel, but Chaim Bermant produces a blend of compassion and absurdity (listen to the exquisitely-timed dialogue between Phyllis and Walter or Avril) which renders these slow, circumscribed lives both touching and hilarious.

The Siblings Dreamed of Strawberries

(When clouds dragged across
the moon's damaged face—she wrote—
I heard my father's footsteps on the stairs.
I willed him to go past my door.
"You like it, don't you?"
But the handle always turned.
I knew if only I could learn the words
to change, to break—to find that power
to unlock the tongue which clamped
my mouth to silence—then I'd be free. . . .)

So his sister hurtled away.
She was on the road with Kerouac's books;
her intellectual model was promiscuity,
though local boys called her "slag".
He stayed behind, yet didn't hear the tumult
of her absence. His head was awash
in some cool well of an imagined past,
holding the trickle of newts on his palms.

Later, he remembered a wartime summer,
the scent of garlic breathed
from bruised leaves of Jack-By-The-Hedge,
a "Clouded Yellow year".
The fields blossomed with butterflies,
as thick as the clovers they fed on;
he thought he had dreamt it
until it happened again in 1983,
while he cycled in the city and tended
a fantasy of allotments.

(. . . I came out. It was such a relief.
All my life I'd been passive,
things had been done to me.
I caught myself looking for a woman's nipples
through the fine crepe of the blouse she wore. . . .)

When he found the smallholding, he saw himself
sinking into it, a stone in that well,
heavy, mossed, settled—woke to a nightmare
of moulds and mildews; deformities.
Whatever thrived, the rabbits ate.
He took to lying with his shotgun in the grass,
and opening their small heads in the moonlight,
drugged with the smell of soft fruits.

(She was smiling and telling of him
to a girl with a twist of yellow hair.
"My brother had a dream of strawberries", she said.)

Shirley Bell

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Books Encountered

Roberto Rossellini. By PETER BRUNETTE. Oxford University Press, £22.50.

Exhaustive chronological study—not a biography—of the true originator of neo-realism in the Italian cinema, tracing his career from its beginnings with the 1941 *La Nave Bianca* (about the wartime Navy), through three other now forgotten projects, on to *Roma, Città Aperta* and *Paisà*, then through a much longer and less famous succession of ventures for both the large and the small screen. Invaluable information; less sure evaluation.

The French Through Their Films. By ROBIN BUSS. Batsford, £12.95.

Worthy successor to the author's similar book on Italy, examining film culture in France, the mood of the times, geography, history, and the family, then giving potted accounts of selected movies under such headings as "Politics and Religion", "Crime and the Law", etc. The sociology surpasses the filmography.

British Writers of the Thirties. By VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM. Oxford University Press, £30.00.

Mammoth seminal re-examination of the period and its writing. Although the dust-jacket features Auden, Isherwood, and Spender, this is far from yet another jog round the beaten track. It recovers countless half-lost names, rearranges the hierarchy, and above all recreates the real material background. Totally absorbing.

The Changing Nature of the Self: A Critical Study of the Autobiographic Discourse. By ROBERT ELBAZ. Croom Helm, £27.50.

The subtitle is more forbidding than the book, in which the Chairman of the Department of French at Haifa University examines in turn Augustine, Abelard, Descartes, Rousseau, and Malraux. He concludes, unsurprisingly, that key concepts such as "selfhood" changed radically over the centuries; but his detailed proof of this is illuminating.

Recognizing Biography. By WILLIAM H. EPSTEIN. University of Pennsylvania Press, £28.45.

In a cognate field, an avowedly "post-modern" analysis of some landmark works: Walton on Donne, Johnson on Savage, Boswell on Johnson, and Lytton Strachey on *Eminent Victorians*. Boswell, Professor Epstein argues, is a "venture capitalist" and the first modern biographer; Strachey, the "homoerotic pacifist", used biography for his own pamphleteering ends. Ingenious, learned decoration of old themes.

From Mangle to Microwave: The Mechanization of Household Work. By CHRISTINA HARDYMENT. Polity Press/Basil Blackwell, £15.00.

Fascinating, nostalgic domestic history, abundantly illustrated from advertisements, cartoons, etc. The author's "perspective" is sensible feminism: she wonders why women have not always seized the chances mechanisation offers them. What astonishes is the early ingenuity of many pioneers, clumsily foreshadowing later and neater gadgets.

The Perfect Failure: Kennedy, Eisenhower, and the CIA at the Bay of Pigs. By TRUMBULL HIGGINS. W. W. Norton, £11.95, $21.50.

Well-documented account of the disastrous attempted invasion of Cuba on 17 April, 1961. Professor Higgins, at present at the City University of New York, aptly reminds us that the operation had been devised under Eisenhower, and shows that it was both too small to succeed and too big to keep secret. He could have drawn analogies with Suez, 1956.

The Burden of German History 1919-45: Essays for the Goethe Institute. Edited by MICHAEL LAFFAN. Methuen, £17.50.

The twelve essays, by academic authors from Germany and Ireland, concentrate (eight against four) on Weimar. Of these, the most interesting are the editor's, on foreign policy, and that by Eda Sagarra, on popular literature. Of the rest, on the Third Reich, I especially recommend Peter Hoffmann's on internal resistance.

Nightmare Memoir: Four Years as a Prisoner of the Nazis. By CLAUDE J. LETULLE. Louisiana State University Press, £16.10.

Harrowing account of a 20-year-old French POW's capture, captivity, and eventual escape to join the French resistance. The worst part of his ordeal was being forced to act as an assistant in a hospital where Nazis experimented on human beings. Now living in the USA, Letulle wrote to exorcise recurrent nightmares.

Fiction of the First World War: A Study. By GEORGE PARFITT. Faber, £4.95.

Excellent account of such writers as Aldington, Arnold Bennett, Buchan, Ford Madox Ford, Lawrence, Wells, Rebecca West, and Henry Williamson; but including also C. R. Bensted, C. S. Forester, Gilbert Frankau, Frederic Manning, R. H. Mottram, and Ernest Raymond, in a series devoted to "reasserting the primacy of the literary text"—as thousands cheer.

The Renewal of Literature: Emersonian Reflections. By RICHARD POIRIER. Faber, £14.95.

A general thrust in the same direction by the Professor of English at Rutgers, who here reasserts Emerson's elucidation of the hidden likeness between literary and other production, concentrating on Eliot, Frost, Hawthorne, the brothers James, Joyce, Melville, Wallace Stevens, and Wordsworth. Masterly.

Dreams and Delusions: The Drama of German History. By FRITZ STERN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.00.

Less a history than a series of connected essays by the Seth Low Professor of History at Columbia, on such subjects as Einstein, Fritz Haber, Ernst Reuter, German Jewry, the 1933 takeover, Germany and America, and "Germany in a Semi-Gaullist Europe". The wise, chastened tone is unsullied by either Teutonic solemnity or American verbosity.

End of a Journey: An Autobiographical Journal 1979-81. By PHILIP TOYNBEE. Bloomsbury, £25.00.

"And I am again being pushed and pulled into this world without words, neither dreaming nor awake, neither moving towards God nor away from him. . . ." So ends this second volume of the diary, completed shortly before the author's death. Fascinating, troubling, and comforting, it may well last longer than his novels and orthodox criticism.

Covert Action: The CIA and American Intervention in the Postwar World. By GREGORY F. TREVERTON. I. B. Tauris, £14.95.

Wide-ranging but summary and sometimes over-generalising, this study—by a Harvard teacher who has served on Senate committees investigating its subject—takes a strongly critical view of CIA expenditure and operations. Much of its information seems convincing, particularly in explaining why Irangate operated outside CIA channels.

The Myth of the Jew in France 1967-1982. By HENRY H. WEINBERG. Mosaic Press, $19.95, paper $12.95.

Polemical account, by a Professor of French literature at Toronto University, of alleged (and disturbingly well documented) French media bias against Israel and the Jews. The book has already aroused controversy in France, where its attacks on *Le Monde* in particular have set the hornets buzzing.

The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. By WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON. University of Chicago Press, $23.95, £15.95.

Penetrating analysis, arguing mainly that inner-city problems are not solely racial: abler and more prosperous people, black and white alike, move out of run-down areas, leaving behind the no-hopers. To concentrate on colour, Professor Wilson argues, is to act unfairly: it's the poor of all hues who need the cash.

R.M.

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CONTROVERSY

Movies & Metaphysics

Steiner, Coates, "Shoah"—By EDWARD ROGERSON

SHOAH, Claude Lanzmann's nine-and-a-half-hour cinematic essay in self-indulgence, has been met in the West with a rare unanimity of critical acclaim. It is the sort of film which is described in publicity leaflets as "an event"—a sure sign that critical faculties have been suspended, that *Shoah* has become exempt from the usual methodology of film criticism. It is as though Lanzmann has performed a necessary and sufficient act of contrition on behalf of all serious film-goers: or, at least, those with the stamina to endure his relentless catalogue of human suffering. In this atmosphere of moral self-righteousness, dissent is transformed into a manifestation of intellectual heresy.

Paul Coates's dissenting opinion in ENCOUNTER ("A Ghetto in Babel", June 1987) is therefore to be welcomed. The film is deeply flawed, in its method and in its motives. Coates has outlined the scale of these flaws: the rather cynical manner in which Lanzmann exploits the agonies of his Holocaust survivors; the distortions inherent in his idiosyncratic use of interpreters; above all, the arrogant certainty of his moral tone. The sheer length of *Shoah* is overwhelming. For the viewer, a feeling of lassitude soon replaces the mesmeric quality which Lanzmann sought to establish through his remorseless slow-tracking of the Holocaust monuments and his frequent repetition of verbal and pictorial detail.

But these are criticisms of a film-maker and his creative aesthetic. In his concentration on the film, Paul Coates has identified only obliquely the real weakness of Lanzmann's creation. In effect, two mutually contradictory elements come together uneasily in *Shoah*—a desire to explain the Holocaust in terms of its most basic elements; and Lanzmann's overwhelming inclination to judge the ambivalent, often morally questionable actions of the Polish population during the Occupation according to the comfortable certainties of the present. Even here, the contradictions are compounded by Lanzmann's persistence in seeing *Shoah* as something altogether more important. He has repeatedly insisted that his film, which has taken up nearly a decade of his time, redefines for contemporary audiences a wider historical reinterpretation of the Holocaust—a reinterpretation, moreover, which has somehow escaped the attention of professional historical researchers for over 40 years.

At best, Lanzmann's is a dubious claim, altogether typical of the documentarist's need for self-justification. But *Shoah* is far from being a best case: the director's fascination with his own opinions casts a shadow over the film's worth as a serious study of the Nazi Holocaust. Paul Coates shows how Lanzmann is prepared to discount testimony which does not accord with his own historical preconceptions of the Holocaust. Seeing Nazism simply as an extreme manifestation of traditional anti-Semitism, Lanzmann widens his imputation of complicity in the mass murder of European Jewry to include, not only the *SS Einsatzkommando* and their Ukrainian or Latvian helpers, but by implication almost all of Poland's passively observant non-Jewish population.

Lanzmann has disclaimed any obligation of "fairness" in his portrayal of the Polish responses to the Holocaust.[1] Such a disclaimer is disingenuous. The documentary approach has often been adopted for frankly propagandist purposes, but rarely has a director appeared so blatantly before his own camera in the combined role of chief witness for the prosecution and prosecuting counsel. This must inevitably compromise the intellectual integrity of the finished product. *Shoah* distorts the Holocaust experience, and only those with a more detailed knowledge of the Polish background can be aware of the extent of this misleading—at times frankly erroneous—act of historical analysis.

Centuries of anti-Semitism and mutual antagonism cannot with honour be cast aside in the interests of "Polish-Jewish reconciliation". But the often bitterly contentious history of Polish-Jewish relations is far more complex than the evidence given in *Shoah* would suggest. Lanzmann's portrayal of the Polish population as a priest-ridden mass of Catholic bigots

EDWARD ROGERSON *writes on various aspects of Eastern European culture and history; he is spending the current academic year at Warsaw University's Institute of Economics as part of his research for a study of the economic reconstruction of post-War Poland. "Cultural Games in a Cold Climate", his discussion of Polish films since Solidarity, appeared in the January 1987 issue of* ENCOUNTER.

[1] Most notably, during a highly charged debate in November 1985 at the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies in Oxford.

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dishonours those Poles who tried to help their Jewish neighbours, overcoming in the process the prejudices of their Polish compatriots and the ever-present threat of German reprisal.[2]

To be fair, Lanzmann is not altogether one-sided. Towards the end of Part Two, after he has presented his own particular version of the Polish responses to the Holocaust, he introduces Jan Karski, a courier for the Polish Government-in-Exile and an eye-witness to the conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto. The problem at this stage is that Lanzmann has so firmly established his own negative view of Polish responses that Karski's fastidious humanity cannot modify the overwhelming impression of Polish indifference and hostility towards the Jewish population.

LANZMANN'S AVOWED LACK OF historical impartiality is only part of the problem. In a deeper sense, *Shoah* is a failure for its director's insensitivity towards the moral implications of the intellectual game he is playing with the Holocaust and its victims. His obsession with all the details of deportation and mass murder has the effect of trivialising the 20th century's deepest tragedy. The Nazi tyranny is seen, not in moral or ideological terms, but as a complex bureaucratic and administrative exercise at once emotionless and sadistic. Cinema is in itself a flawed medium for the serious discussion of abstract moral issues, but Lanzmann positively avoids analysis beyond the most basic level.

Shoah is a film of comfortable prejudices and opinions. There is much to shock any audience receptive enough to hear the testimony of the survivors; but Lanzmann seems unwilling to explain to his audience the wider implications of Nazi policy in their Polish "laboratory". From a position of post-War moral and material security, Lanzmann interprets the tragedy of the Holocaust according to his memories of fly-posting his Clermont-Ferrand *lycée* with anti-Nazi slogans. Add to this a received opinion—never properly explored by the director—that Poles are anti-Semitic, and the result is a film which does little more than confirm its director's poorly defined moral prejudices. Lanzmann has presented *Shoah* as an exercise in personal intellectual discovery; it is not only his Polish critics who have begun to wonder whether this exercise has been conducted with a closed mind.

IN GENERAL, CINEMA IS a medium poorly suited to the exploration of the complex abstract concepts which underpin any attempt to explain the Holocaust. This is not necessarily a disadvantage. Some "Holocaust Cinema" has made a powerful artistic—even intellectual—impression in the exploration of human emotional responses to Nazi inhumanity. *Pasazerka* (1962), Andrzej Munk's unfinished masterpiece, is among the most startling artistic examinations of the psychology which held together the Nazi concentration-camp system.

Munk's film, although by no means an isolated example, is a relatively rare exception. Films intellectually more impressive and, in my view, more honest than *Shoah* have—intentionally or otherwise—come to grief on the difficulty of exploring with conviction the Holocaust experience. Alan Resnais failed to resolve this problem in *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955), even though he began with a clear conception of what he hoped to achieve. It is easy to abandon rationality in favour of eloquent expression. And even eloquence can be confused with less coherent forms of cinematic discourse. All too often, cinematic interpretations of the Holocaust lapse into sentimentality or empty expressions of moral self-righteousness.[3]

George Steiner's recent essay in ENCOUNTER ("Reflections on the Holocaust", February 1987) is a judicious reminder that rationality and eloquence have only a tenuous place in the post-Auschwitz hermeneutic dilemma. The essay is principally concerned with the apparent insufficiency of rationality in coming to terms with the Nazi policy of mass murder and extermination. For the author, eloquence is not really at issue.

This is difficult to accept. In furthering any understanding of the Holocaust, eloquence *is* at issue, *must* be at issue. Eloquence is often the only real contribution a creative artist can make in the debate on the Holocaust. The Polish poet Tadeusz Różewicz spoke of poetry, "post-Auschwitz", as a struggle for breath, a noise fighting its way through a strangled throat[4]—poetry, nevertheless, which deserved to find its own voice—despite the barbarism of a century which has challenged the durability of humanity's spiritual and cultural values.

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[2] See Neal Ascherson, "The Frontiers of Art and History", *The Observer*, 9 November 1986.

[3] Some manage both. *Sophie's Choice* (1982) turned Auschwitz into a sentimental star vehicle for Meryl Streep. (See also, in ENCOUNTER, January 1980, "Art Between Truth & Fiction", Arnold Wesker's critique of William Styron's novel.) *Holocaust* (NBC-TV, 1978) further reduced the tragedy to the level of a prime-time soap opera.

[4] This "struggle for breath" is at its most noticeable in his 1948 collection, *The Red Glove*. Rózewicz's laconic and frugal poetic style transfers easily in English translation. See *Conversation with the Prince*, an anthology translated by Adam Czerniawski (Anvil Press, London, 1982).

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Lanzmann would certainly endorse the value of eloquent testimony. In his defence of *Shoah*, he has argued that the testimony of his Holocaust survivors is much more starkly revealed in the spectacle of their emotional suffering in front of his camera. The dirctor feels justified in forcing them to relive the past, since it impresses upon the film's audience the true scale of the Nazi tyranny.

On the contrary. What we are given in *Shoah*, as in most other films and documentaries examining the Holocaust, is a curious attack of moral self-righteousness. Lanzmann's victims—and by his method he forces them to *become* his victims—can communicate the full scale of their experience only to those willing to listen. An audience without first-hand experience of the Holocaust can comprehend the enormity of the tragedy only through a complex emotional and intellectual balancing-act. There are times when a just condemnation of an atrocity perpetrated against innocent human beings is not enough, when it is better to listen in silence to the testimony of a survivor. By frequently imposing his own judgments, Lanzmann disturbs this uneasy equilibrium. He prevents his audience from listening.

Shoah is clearly intended, above all, to condemn the Holocaust. But it is debatable whether the method adopted by the director is adequate for such a purpose. Lanzmann seems at times to ignore the wider context of his subject, and he allows himself to become obsessed with the technical and administrative minutiae of mass-destruction. Furthermore, he is unwilling to abandon his predetermined stance of moral inflexibility.

In a sense, George Steiner's analysis offers a critical methodology almost too subtle for *Shoah*. It is difficult to discuss the essential abstraction of Steiner's metaphysical approach in a medium which depends for its impact on images and emotional responses. But Lanzmann seems hardly to have tried to cope with the more speculative issues which increasingly dominate studies of the Holocaust.

Outrage is the only clear motive force in Lanzmann's film. Steiner's essay reveals that such moral outrage, however justified and important it may prove to be, can be understood only as an *a priori* element in an approach to the Holocaust. My initial thought was to criticise the film for its lack of coherence, but a coherent approach is not essential. What is needed, rather, is a balance between the director's moral outrage and an understanding of the wider context.

Lanzmann fails to provide this necessary balance. Furthermore, by concentrating on the minutiae of Nazi mass murder, he understates the uniqueness of the events described in *Shoah*. Lanzmann has not played fair with his audience. More to the point, he has not played fair with his witnesses and their harrowing testimony.

AUTHORS

Joseph Epstein's essay will appear in *Political Passages: Journeys of Change through Two Decades, 1968-1988*, edited by John H. Bunzel and published this spring by The Free Press, New York.

John Mowat, a lecturer in English at the University of Hull, has published studies of Saul Bellow, James Joyce and Anthony Burgess. "But", he writes, "I have in my time been a steel worker, bartender, and journalist (once, briefly, on the *Yorkshire Post)*, and these days cannot be absolutely certain that I will not be earning a crust in such jobs again. . . ."

Gordon H. Dyson's latest collection of poems, "Twenty-four Preludes", appeared in an anthology, *Full House*, published by Rivelin Grapheme in 1985.

Alistair Horne is a journalist, lecturer, and author of several books on modern history, including *The Fall of Paris* (1965), *Small Earthquake in Chile* (1972), *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-62* (1977, new ed., 1987), and *The French Army and Politics, 1870-1970* (1984). He is shortly to publish the official biography of Harold Macmillan.

Jean-François Revel, the French philosopher and critic, writes a regular column for *Le Point* in Paris. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, was published in 1985 by Weidenfeld (London) and Doubleday (New York).

Andrew Shelley read English at Trinity College, Cambridge. He lived for a period in Greece, returning to England to study Samuel Beckett at Worcester College, Oxford (he is working on a study of Beckett's later prose). His criticism has appeared in various magazines, and he is a regular reviewer for, among others, *Poetry Nation Review*.

Alan Brownjohn is Chairman of the Poetry Society in London. His most recent book of poems, *The Old Flea-Pit*, was published in 1987 by Century Hutchinson, who later this year are to reissue in an enlarged version his *Collected Poems*, originally published in 1983.

John Mole's books of poetry include *In and Out of the Apple* and *Homing* (Secker & Warburg, 1984, 1987).

Ian Thomson lived for two years in Rome, during which time he interviewed (mainly for the *London Magazine*, to which he is a frequent contributor) Primo Levi, Italo Calvino, Alberto Morava, Natalia Ginzburg, Leonardo Sciascia, and Umberto Eco. He has translated Sciascia's *Chronachette*, to be published in the summer, and is working on a biography of James Lovell Beddoes.

Peter Bauer writes: "Once again I have benefited greatly from the advice and suggestions of Basil Yamey, my close collaborator for many years. Bryan Healing's help was invaluable in the final drafting of this essay."

Edward Pearce is a columnist for *The Sunday Times*, and author of two volumes of sketches of Parliamentary personalities, *The Senate of Lilliput* and *Hummingbirds and Hyenas* (Faber, 1983, 1985). His latest book, *Looking Down on Mrs Thatcher*—published in 1987 by Hamish Hamilton—includes several of his political articles from ENCOUNTER.

Gerda Mayer's poem *Make Believe*, first broadcast on *Poetry Now*, Radio 3, is included in her latest collection, *A Heartache of Grass* (published this spring by Peterloo Poets). She writes: "My father, Arnold Stein, escaped from a concentration camp in Nisko, fled to Russian-occupied Poland, and disappeared in the summer of 1940. It is thought he may have died in a Russian camp. . . ."

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ECONOMICS

Creating the Third World

Foreign Aid & Its Offspring—By PETER BAUER

THE THIRD WORLD as a concept is the creation of foreign aid. Without aid there is no such collectivity as the Third World or the "South". Aid is the source of the North-South conflict, not its solution.

The Third World and its predecessor synonyms—the less-developed world, the underdeveloped world, the developing world, the non-aligned world—are no more than names for the countries whose governments, with occasional exceptions, demand and receive official transfers of aid from the West. (Practically all Third World governments are aid recipients, but not all aid recipients are in the Third World.)

The peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America live in the most diverse physical, cultural, social and political environments. They differ in many respects—in cultural, technical, and commercial sophistication, in political arrangements, and in income, wealth, and rate of economic progress. They were not aggregated into a single category of supposedly common characteristics and interests until the beginning of aid.

The peoples of the Third World constitute a rich variety of humanity. It is condescending for people in the West to regard them as being a largely undifferentiated and stagnant mass. It is even more unwarranted condescension to argue or act as if they were helpless victims who crave material progress but must depend on Western donations to achieve it.

Aid has produced the Third World or the underdeveloped world, but it cannot achieve its declared purpose of development and the relief of poverty. Yet the case for foreign aid is usually taken for granted, especially in Europe. Larger aid flows are described as improved aid performance. Giving more means doing better. The use of the term aid to describe these transfers has obscured realities, prejudged results, and disarmed critical discussion. Who could be against helping the less fortunate? The supporters of aid lay claim to a monopoly of compassion, and dismiss critics as ignorant, bigoted, uncaring.

If the aid policy were to be described by its appropriate name—*government to government subsidies*—it would lose much of its emotional appeal. Then, too, it would be more readily apparent that aid has been and remains a major factor in the politicisation of life in less-developed countries.

In current parlance, foreign aid means official government economic assistance in the form of grants, heavily subsidised loans, or unpaid technical assistance—as distinct from commercial investment, military aid, or the activities of voluntary organisations. Although the term aid is misleading, it would be pedantic to avoid this widely used expression, and in this article I use aid, subsidies, and transfers interchangeably.

Bilateral aid goes direct from donor government to recipient government; multilateral aid goes through the international organisations for subsequent reallocation by them. This terminology also misleads, because the words bilateral and multilateral imply a reciprocity which is absent—the donors give and the recipients receive without reciprocity. Having entered this *caveat*, I fall in with the accepted terminology.

EVER SINCE the 1940s, it has been the consensus of mainstream development economists (including Nobel Laureates) that foreign aid is indispensable for reasonable progress in the less-developed countries. This has also been the opinion of

PETER BAUER, *from 1960-83 Professor of Economics (with special reference to economic development and underdeveloped countries) at the London School of Economics, is now Emeritus Professor of Economics and Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He was created a Life Peer in 1982. His earlier articles in* ENCOUNTER *include contributions (October 1981 and March 1982) to the debate on the Brandt Report, and, as co-author, "Black Africa: The Living Legacy of Dying Colonialism" (February 1984), and "Aid & Its Effects" (March 1982). Among his books, whose controversial views on foreign aid are now becoming more widely accepted, are "West African Trade" (1954), "Economic Analysis and Policy in Under-Developed Countries (1958), "Indian Economic Policy and Development" (1961), "Markets, Market Control and Marketing Reform" (with B. S. Yamey, 1968), "Dissent on Development" (1972), "Aspects of Nigerian Development" (1974), "Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion" (1981), and "Reality and Rhetoric: Studies in the Economics of Development" (1984).*

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leading academic economists in other fields when they occasionally wrote on development. The consensus was succinctly summarised a few years ago by Professor Hollis B. Chenery of Harvard, a former Vice-President of the World Bank in charge of economic development: "Foreign aid is the central component of world development."[1]

Yet a vast amount of development has taken place—and still takes place—without foreign aid. Aid played no part in the development of Western Europe, or of large areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which progressed very rapidly long before the policy of aid was invented.

Although the case for aid is rarely questioned, its advocates occasionally buttress their pleas by specific arguments. Over the years the most influential has been that aid is necessary for relief of misery in the Third World. This is to be achieved through one or other of two routes: transfers to the poorest countries in the hope that this will help directly to improve the lot of the very poor; and transfers to these countries in the hope that this will promote development, thereby eliminating acute poverty.

These two objectives—development and relief of poverty—imply quite different criteria of allocation and quite different expected results, much in the same way as subsidised loans to promising youngsters for their education or to help them set up in business differ from giving alms to a beggar or financial support to an invalid. Aid to the helpless is not the same as support to the promising. Since around the mid-1970s, direct relief of human need has been especially prominent in aid advocacy; over a longer period, the promotion of economic development has been the more durable selling-point.

1. The Real Recipients

AID TRANSFERS do not go to the pathetic creatures pictured in the publicity campaigns of the aid lobbies. The money goes to their governments: that is, their rulers.[2] And all too often these rulers are directly responsible for the gruesome conditions that we wish to alleviate. Aid helps, even enables, such governments to pursue policies which are extremely harmful to their people.

1. Maltreatment of the most productive groups, especially minorities, and sometimes their expulsion.

2. Enforced movements of population.

3. Coercive collectivisation and other forms of expropriation.

4. Suppression of private trade.

5. Underpayment of farmers.

6. Restriction of the inflow of capital, enterprise, and skills.

7. Voluntary or compulsory purchase of foreign enterprises, thus absorbing scarce capital and depriving the country of skills which are helpful to development.

8. Massive spending on prestige projects or on the support of uneconomic activities, especially manufacturing.

Such policies, even singly but much more so when pursued together, can undermine or cripple the economy. Viet Nam, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda are conspicuous examples of destructive policies, and in a large measure also of the neglect of the basic tasks of government: notably the protection of people's lives and property. This neglect of the basic functions of government amidst wholesale politicisation of life is widespread in aid-recipient countries.

Extreme cases apart, many aid recipients pursue policies which directly reduce incomes by such practices as the persecution of productive groups or the restriction of the employment of women. Such governments can qualify for more aid, since the allocation of much Western aid is determined by per-capita incomes. It is a notable paradox that official transfers reward policies of impoverishment.

The misery brought about by the aid-recipient rulers in Black Africa and the massive persecution practised by many of them have forced hundreds of thousands of their subjects to flee their countries. Substantial appeals by international organisations have collected many millions of dollars to alleviate their conditions. But the flight of these refugees was a result of the conduct of their rulers, whose political survival has often depended on aid.

Over most of the Third World there is no machinery for relief of poverty by the state. Even if a recipient government wanted to use official transfers to help the very poorest, this could be difficult, even impossible. More important, such help may not accord with the political or ideological priorities of a Third World ruler, or, indeed, with local mores.

This situation is particularly clear in multi-racial, multi-tribal, or multi-cultural countries. Will an Arab-dominated Sudanese government help the poorest blacks in the southern Sudan, hundreds of miles away, with whom it is in persistent armed conflict? Are the rulers of Ethiopia likely to help the people of Tigre, whose distress is exacerbated—or caused—by their government's military action? Would a Sinhalese-dominated government help the poorest among the Tamils? Such questions can be asked about practically every government in Asia and Africa.

THE PRIORITIES OF Third World rulers are reflected in their massive spending on prestige projects. Brand-new capitals, built from scratch at the cost of many billions of dollars, are often incomplete many years after construction first began—

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[1] *New York Times*, 1 March 1981. Landmarks of the official literature along these lines include the United Nations *Report on the Economic Development of Under-Developed Countries* (1951), the Pearson Report, *Partners in Development* (1969), and the Brandt Report, *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (1980).

[2] In some cases the transfers go *through* the governments rather than to them, but this distinction does not affect my argument, since these transfers still require the approval of the recipient government.

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Abuja in Nigeria, for instance, or Dodoma in Tanzania. Even more grotesque is the lavish expenditure on the activities of the inappropriately-named "Organisation of African Unity", located in Addis Ababa.

From Viet Nam to Brazil, from Sri Lanka to West Africa, the Third World is littered with monuments and relics of unviable and grandiose schemes, undertaken for the political and personal purposes of the rulers and their local allies—and, at times, of Western commercial interests. Such projects are not abandoned even when it has become evident that they are wasteful and cannot achieve their declared objective. They are often a substantial drain on local economies.

These programmes and policies, evident for decades, continue to this day. For instance, the *Financial Times* (16 September 1987) has described in detail the origins and cost of Air Lanka, the state-owned and state-run airline which is a major burden on a poor country oppressed by civil conflict. Because it is the pride of President Jayawardene, Air Lanka has not been put into liquidation.

On the same theme, *The Economist* (19 September 1987) carried a lengthy review of two books describing the operation of aid to Tanzania and Mozambique. Their Swedish authors, once supporters of aid but now disillusioned, gave vivid examples of hopeless and expensive aid-financed projects.[3] As one of them wrote of Tanzania: "The assistance was part of the making of the crisis. . . ."

Black Africa has been perhaps most afflicted. Many of its programmes were never feasible from the outset, because of lack of skilled personnel, materials, and components. "White Elephants in Black Africa", an article in *The New Republic* (29 December 1986), describes a number of such projects, and notes the forces (including pressure by Western commercial interests) that lay behind them.

Stingy?

MOST PEOPLE *in Britain think we give more help to the Third World than is actually the case, and more than half want an increase in overseas aid, according to a Marplan Opinion Poll published yesterday. Almost two-thirds of the British public would support higher taxes to help the world's poorest people. But 19% of the population opposes Britain giving aid to poorer countries.*

The poll was commissioned by the overseas aid charity ActionAid to launch its annual fund-raising week. Marplan conducted the survey during September 11-15, using a sample of 1,500 adults aged over 15 in 103 parts of the country.

"One of the most striking aspects of the poll is the way it contradicts stereotyped views of British society [said Ronald Hodson, chief executive of ActionAid]. It is widely thought that we are now a more selfish society, yet our poll shows that 53% want more aid.

In a 1984 poll, only 41% wished to see an increase in Britain's aid, and in pre-Band Aid 1983 another poll registered a paltry 16% who wanted to see Britain's aid increased."

The poll also explodes the myth of the "stingy Scot", Mr Hodson said, showing Scots to be significantly more in favour of aid than the English.

BRITAIN GAVE **£1,358 million in overseas assistance last year, making it the sixth largest donor in the world in absolute terms and the twelfth largest when aid is judged as a proportion of gross national product.**

The Conservative Government cut overseas aid in line with its general trimming of public expenditure when it first came into office in 1979. But since 1983 overseas development aid has remained constant in real terms and the Government is committed to maintaining this level for at least the next three years.

THE CHARITIES *Aid Foundation says that there has been a rise in private donations to overseas aid charities since 1979, peaking recently with the success of the Band Aid appeal for victims of famine in Africa.*

Last year, the top overseas aid charities in Britain received more than £134 million in private donations.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

OFFICIAL TRANSFERS go to governments. They expand the resources, privileges, patronage, and power of the government in relation to the rest of society. This promotes politicisation of life; and politicisation, in turn, increases the stakes—both gains and losses—in the struggle for power.

Foreign aid has helped to unleash the forces that lie behind the recurrent or persistent civil wars of the Third World. The tensions resulting from extensive politicisation frequently erupt into armed conflict, even in countries where in the past the different communities have lived together peaceably for generations: witness Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Recurrent civil wars contribute to the Third World's heavy spending on arms: in 1981 the West German Ministry of Economic Cooperation estimated that Third World spending on arms was about one-fifth of the total world spending for this purpose. And these arms are intended for use against their own subjects, or against other Third World countries.

When life is extensively politicised, and civil conflict widespread, people's economic lot—even their economic survival—depends on what happens in the political and military arena. People come to be much more concerned with what will happen to them as a result of political, administrative, or military action than with devoting attention, energy and resources to productive economic activity.

OVER LARGE AREAS of Asia and Africa the population has been pushed back into subsistence production, or has been held in that precarious state of existence.

The coercive collectivisation of agriculture, the enforced mass migration in Tanzania ($3 bn in foreign aid from 1980-

[3] Bertil Egero, *Mozambique: A Dream Undone*, and J. Boesen, *et al.*, eds, *Tanzania: Crisis and Struggle for Survival* (Nordisker Afrikainstitut, Uppsala).

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84), the large-scale and protracted civil war in the Sudan ($2.3 bn), the numerous expensive and unviable prestige projects in these countries, the underpayment of farmers, and the role of aid in sustaining the rulers have been described in detail in the Western press. Such reports have appeared in quality newspapers notably sympathetic to the rulers responsible for these situations—including *The Times*, the *Financial Times* and the *New Statesman* in Britain, and *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Christian Science Monitor* in the USA.

Ethiopia's misery has been brought to the notice of tens of millions of people in the West.[4] How many of them know that its Marxist-Leninist government has regularly received, and still receives, large-scale Western subsidies? These totalled about $1.3 bn over the five years from 1980-84. Throughout this period, the Ethiopian government pursued every single one of the policies I have instanced. Large-scale subsidies continue, even though the government persists in policies which, in the West, are recognised across the political spectrum as destructive for the people at large.

But what has happened to all the money? The inflow of aid has not prevented widespread famine, acute shortage of basic necessities, especially in the poorer areas, and scarcity of seeds and simple agricultural implements. It has, however, helped the government to fight its several civil wars, and to finance the Organisation of African Unity.

COULD WE AVOID such perverse effects by giving money direct to the poorest? This is not possible on any significant scale, since Third World governments insist on retaining control over the allocation of aid, including major forms of voluntary charity.[5] To the extent that direct allocation to the poor is possible, it creates another problem: sustained aid encourages chronic dependence, a persistent reliance on handouts. For various cultural and social reasons, this outcome is likely in much of Asia and Africa. For instance, in the 1980s dependence was readily observable in the Sahel, as has been acknowledged by both administrators and advocates of aid. It has also been noted in Micronesia, the US trust territory in the Pacific.

To adapt the language of the 19th-century English Poor Law, sustained official donations promote global pauperisation through world-wide outdoor relief. To use a Marxist term, handouts to governments which promote or perpetuate poverty reward immiseration.

2. *The Double Asymmetry*

WHAT OF AID as an instrument of development? The misconception that money is necessary for development, and possibly also sufficient for it, has been a leitmotif in the advocacy of development aid since its inception in the early post-War years. The most familiar formulation of this idea, based on "the vicious circle of poverty", insists that without donations a society cannot emerge from backwardness. As we have seen, this proposition is inconsistent with evident reality: both the West and much of the Third World advanced greatly without external donations.

Large-volume and low-cost investible funds (i.e. money available for capital outlay) are not critical for economic advance. If they were, millions of very poor people—individuals, familiy groups, and whole societies—would not have risen from poverty to riches in a few years (or decades), as has happened the world over. Much research by leading scholars has confirmed that investible funds play a very limited causal role in development.[6]

Lack of money is not the *cause* of poverty: it *is* poverty. Conversely, to possess money is the *result* of economic achievement, not its *precondition*.[7] This confusion between cause and effect underlies the uncritical, axiomatic approach to official aid. Whatever happens in the recipient countries can be adduced as argument for further transfers. If the countries progress, this is seen as evidence of the efficacy of aid, and as ground for giving more. If the recipient countries stagnate or retrogress, then obviously the aid must have been insufficient—and more is needed.

Governments and enterprises in the Third World which are able to use capital productively can borrow abroad as well as at home. External funds are available to both private and official Third World borrowers who conduct their finances responsibly. For instance, Western and Levantine trading enterprises have regularly lent substantial amounts to trustworthy borrowers, even in very poor African countries. Recent experience has shown that Third World governments can borrow in the West very readily (perhaps too readily).

This applies also to borrowing for infrastructure. If harbours, bridges, roads are productive, they increase incomes and therefore taxable capacity, so that governments can readily service the borrowed funds.

The maximum contribution that foreign aid can make to development is, therefore, no more than the avoided cost of borrowing in the market-place: that is, the interest charges

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[4] For careful documentation and analysis, see in ENCOUNTER (June, July-August, and September-October 1987), Paul Henze's articles, "Behind the Ethiopian Famine".

[5] A report in the *Financial Times* (4 October 1984) made it clear that the Ethiopian Politburo was to head the distribution of relief in that country; it would therefore necessarily be allocated in accordance with the objectives of the Ethiopian government.

[6] The need for more capital has always been the principal argument for official development aid. This underlines an anomaly: most aid recipients, perhaps all aid recipients, restrict the inflow of foreign private capital. Although the volume of investible funds is not critical for development, inflow of private capital is undoubtedly helpful, especially as it is usually accompanied by an inflow of skills, and of new ideas and methods of production.

[7] Some individuals become rich through windfalls, privileged incomes, and the like. Such occurrences do not affect the argument, and do not promote sustained development.

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and amortisation (repayment of principal) which would have been paid on commercial loans. This conclusion is not affected by differences in local conditions, government policies, or the type of aid given.

HOWEVER, ANY CONTRIBUTION which aid can make to development by reducing the cost of borrowing is likely to be offset by certain adverse repercussions. Most of these operate on personal, cultural, social, and political factors—which, unlike the amount and cost of investible funds, are indeed critical for economic performance.

1. The most important adverse repercussion is the promotion of politicisation, with its attendant baleful effects.

2. The belief that economic improvement depends on external factors is another adverse repercussion. Advocacy and inflow of official subsidies promote this misconception, which diverts attention from the basic determinants of development and from the possibilities of improving them. In the advanced countries, people developed unaided the attitudes, conduct and institutions which lie behind their economic progress. Preoccupation with external subsidies ignores these realities. The familiar shibboleth that aid helps people to help themselves is very nearly the complete opposite of the truth.

3. Some strands of aid advocacy encourage blackmail and beggary, attitudes not helpful to economic development. The argument that a reduction of aid will result in hostility to the West is a form of political blackmail. Acceptance of demands for debt write-offs as a form of aid favours in this context the imprudent and dishonest over those who are ready to meet their obligations.

4. Foreign aid tends to encourage the adoption of inappropriate external models in development and planning, often with considerable drain on the recipient country's resources.

5. A further significant result needs to be noted, even though its exposition is slightly technical. The inflow of of-

Bob Geldof . . . & the Lessons of Band Aid

I WASN'T SHOCKED **when I put out my hand and touched the child. I had already seen the twig-like limbs hanging on the balloon belly, the bulbous head and far-away eyes, as if pitying the suffering of someone else. I had seen it all before—on television.**

What was shocking was what the young Irish nurse referred to as "the youngest child syndrome". When famine comes in Africa the father eats first, then the eldest boys, then the mother and the girls in order. The youngest child off the breast will be the first to die, and famine will work its way up through the family.

I thought of my own three-year-old daughter and tried to imagine eating while she starved to death. I couldn't. We do not know what decades of recurrent drought and famine do to people and what mechanisms they have been forced to adopt to survive in a cruel climate. Distance is not only physical.

A FEW DAYS LATER *I flew home, passing a few thousand feet from where that little girl was dying. The hostess handed me the menu, which read: "Dinner—Refreshing appetizer of papaya and fresh seafood salad. Grilled fillet steak with pepper-flavoured butter served with green beans, tomato and baked potato, or fillet of fresh salmon poached in white wine then finished with cream, fennel and chives. . . ."*

It was that sort of obscenity, the mountains of plenty piled so close to starvation, that made Bob Geldof rage so effectively against the African famine of 1984. Suddenly he made millions of people feel they could do something. Band Aid, Live Aid, and Sport Aid produced £76m, more than the income of all the main aid agencies put together in the year before the famine.

Now famine has returned. It was predicted as far back as August. The response has been poor so far, but so has the publicity. Geldof is flying to Ethiopia and soon we will be seeing starving children on the "Nine O'Clock News" again. The aid agencies are expected to launch an emergency appeal today, but they are worried that people who gave a pound or two last time believed they were solving the problem and may not give a second time.

IT WAS GELDOF, **among others, who gave the impression that the problem could be solved by a donation. His simple message raised money, but could it be turned into simple action? He promised the money would go straight to the people who needed it. The effing bureaucrats and their red tape would be cut out.**

This apparently included the aid agencies, which Geldof thought were top-heavy and wasteful. Soon after he became involved he recalled trying to decide whether to create a new organisation to channel the money to Africa.

"Nearly every agency I talked to would have had to take part of the money to cover their enormous overheads. This is necessary when organisations are permanent and require a large staff to function properly but I had given my word that 100% of every penny would go to Africa without being sidetracked or wasted. If someone gave a pound then a pound would go. The only way around the problem was to eliminate the middleman and go direct to the source."

So Band Aid was set up. Filled with idealism and staffed almost entirely by volunteers, it tried to kick down the barriers it believed were mythical. The director was a young architect, Kevin Jenden, assisted by his wife, Penny, an anthropologist. Mr Jenden was brash and inexperienced. "What we've done is make starvation sexy", he said. It was one thing for superstar Geldof to upset the European Community bureaucrats, but another for his staff to upset other aid agencies and the governments his organisation would have to work with if it was going to fulfil its pledge.

GHASTLY MISTAKES *were made. In Sudan, Band Aid bought second-hand lorries for more than $4m. They were in very bad shape and needed a lot of money and repairs. In Ethiopia, determined not to allow political differences*

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ficial transfers drives up the real rate of exchange, and this adversely affects a recipient country's competitiveness in foreign trade. This effect can be offset to the extent that the subsidised transfers increase productivity in the country. But such an increase is in practice unlikely—and even if it did occur, could take place only after a time-lag of years. In the meantime, the higher real exchange rate makes for continued dependence on external assistance. This particular effect of external subsidies follows from the well-established proposition of international trade theory: an inflow of capital supports the real exchange rate.

THESE ADVERSE repercussions (the list could readily be extended) are compounded by anomalous criteria and policies in the allocation of aid, and by the practice of Western donors in favouring governments who try to establish closely controlled economies. Extensive state control is often thought to reflect the determination of Third World governments to accelerate economic progress. In reality it obstructs development in various ways, including restriction of external contacts.

THE MAJOR ADVERSE repercussions arise because aid does not simply descend like manna from heaven. It accrues to the government. It adds to government revenues, and to its external balances. Aid is generally significant compared to these magnitudes, and often exceeds them.

In its effects on development, the operation of official subsidies involves a double asymmetry.

First, any favourable effect is on a resource which is not critical for development, whereas the adverse effects operate on critical determinants.

Second, an amount of subsidy which is insufficient to benefit development appreciably (by reducing the cost of investible funds) is amply sufficient to set in train the adverse

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to get in the way of food aid, Band Aid was determined to get help to Eritrea and Tigray through the rebel movements which control the countryside in those areas. A lorry was sent on a ship going to Port Sudan so that it could be taken into Tigray by land through Sudan. But the ship stopped first at the Ethiopian port of Asab. With **"To the people of Tigray from the people of Watford"** *emblazoned on its side, the lorry stood on deck in full view of Ethiopian officials who were not slow to point out that as Tigray was part of Ethiopia they could look after it.*

BAND AID **learned quickly. On that occasion it quickly gave another lorry to Tigray. Even before the Live Aid concert in the summer of 1985, Geldof was beginning to realise that relief was only the start of the solution. Ethiopia needed long-term commitment, not one-off gifts. A committee was set up to investigate how to spend the millions of pounds raised.**

Many of its members were connected with the aid agencies—the very people Geldof had condemned as bureaucrats earlier. As the need for emergency relief subsided but the money kept flowing in, a debate developed about how it should be spent. Some of Band Aid's trustees argued that it should be kept on ice for the next famine. Others pointed out that if the money went into longer-term projects such as rehabilitation, reafforestation and conservation, the risk of another disaster would be lessened.

THE COMMITTEE *decided to spend 60% of its funds on long-term development. But Africa is littered with the skeletons of well-meaning, long-term development projects not properly researched. Slowly Band Aid realised that development meant hiring professionals, writing reports, discussing them in committees, referring back, scrutinising results. Overheads and bureaucracy reared their ugly heads. Band Aid found the most effective way to channel the money was through agencies already in place, and it started to give them money. When the Disasters Emergency Committee launches its appeal, Geldof will be asking people to give to its members—the aid agencies he once accused of having "colossal overheads".*

The least charitable of the charities say that Geldof and Band Aid were never able to deliver their promise to get the money to the people in need faster than anyone else. They regard Band Aid as an amateurish organisation and say it is slow to disburse its funds. Others point out that they had struggled to bring the Ethiopian famine to the world's attention without success for nearly a year before the BBC film and Geldof's raw anger set the public on fire. As a result of the Geldof publicity the income of the other aid agencies soared. Band Aid managed to tap younger and more working-class people than the traditional agencies.

IF BAND AID **has grown up quickly, it has not lost all of its ideals. It is still committed to closing down by the end of this year. It has also succeeded in keeping its overheads low. They run at under 1% compared to 4% for Oxfam and 2.2% for Save The Children, not themselves profligate. Oxfam spends 14% of its income on further fundraising, Save the Children 8.4%. Band Aid doesn't have to spend a cent on fundraising. One aid agency official said:**

> *"Band Aid did not make any more mistakes than anyone else. We have all moved from being relief workers to development officers to wrestling with the political cause, of poverty and made mistakes on the way. It's taken us decades. Band Aid did it in months. They also made their mistakes in months."*

PERHAPS THE GREATEST MYTH **Band Aid helped to create was the feeling that it was able to change the world with donations. But however generously given, the Band Aid funds are comparatively small—about £76m. In 1986 the British government gave £285m to Africa. For political reasons, none of that went to help development in Ethiopia.**

Bureaucracy, politics, culture, climate . . . the pain of seeing the dying children again may be followed by the more painful realisation that giving money is only the first step to helping give them life.

Richard Dowden
in THE INDEPENDENT (*London*)

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effects. This is so because a given volume of aid is smaller in relation to the Gross Domestic Product than it is to the government budget or the foreign exchange earnings of the recipient country. It is the relationship to GDP that is relevant for the favourable effects, and the relationship to budgets and foreign earnings that is relevant for the unfavourable effects.

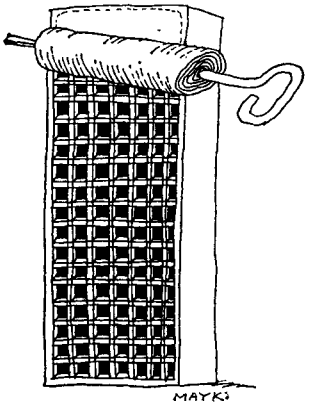
Aid is demonstrably not necessary for economic development. This is evident from the progress both of the West and of much of the Third World long before the advent of aid. Whether it is helpful or damaging to development cannot be established conclusively, but the reasons presented here strongly suggest that aid is much more likely to inhibit development than to promote it.

HERE IT MAY BE USEFUL to forestall two objections. First, the argument is in no way refuted by the progress of some aid recipients, or by the success of particular aid projects. The maximum contribution of aid to such success stories can never exceed the avoided cost of borrowing, and the adverse repercussions still operate.

Second, although aid can do little or nothing for development, or for the improvement of the lot of the poorest, it can at times ameliorate shortages, especially of imported goods. Relief of acute shortages, however, by augmenting supplies serves to conceal from the population—at least temporarily—the worst effects of destructive policies. Western aid, under such conditions, confers spurious respectability on the rulers, which again assists them in maintaining their position.

Western aid was critical in maintaining Dr Nyerere in power in Tanzania from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s—amidst forcible collectivisation and villagisation, and suppression of private commerce and industry. It has propped up Colonel Mengistu in Ethiopia and (at various times since the early 1960s) Milton Obote in Uganda.[8]

3. Biting the Hand . . .



ADVOCATES OF AID often use various *ad hoc* arguments. These arguments shift according to the audience addressed and the vagaries of politics and public discourse. Here are three currently much-canvassed examples.

1. Without further subsidies, Third World debtors would be forced to default on their loans, and the resulting Western banking crisis would endanger the entire financial system of the West.

If taxpayers' money is to be used to bail out the banks, this should be done directly, rather than by laundering the money through debtor governments—who might not, in the event, actually use it to service their debts. Indeed, why should they, when they are not pressed to do so by their creditors? Even open default by the debtors would not endanger the Western financial system, since default need not result either in a domino effect or in a substantial contraction in the money supply. If large-scale open default really carried serious risks for the financial system, shouldn't the monetary authorities encourage the lending banks to strengthen their capital base by reducing dividends and raising new money, rather than force them to lend further sums to defaulting debtors? Throwing good money after bad simply wastes more capital.

2. Subsidies to foreign governments are necessary to maintain exports, output, and employment in the West.

If government spending were required for this purpose, it could be achieved far more effectively by increased domestic spending.

3. Aid serves Western political and strategic interests.

But to serve this end, transfers would have to be geared both to the strategic importance of the recipients and to their conduct. In fact, many of the recipient countries are of no political or military significance. And many of the recipient governments are openly hostile to aid donors, whom they attempt to embarrass and oppose whenever they can. The West feeds the mouths that abuse it.

RECEIPT OF OFFICIAL SUBSIDIES provides the only common characteristic and bond of the varied constituents of the Third World. What else is there in common between Malaysia and Mozambique, Nepal and Argentina, India and Chad, Tuvalu and Brazil, Burma and Nigeria? The common bond has enabled their governments to act as a collectivity in demanding subsidies from the West.

The Third World, since its emergence as a collectivity, has been consistently hostile to the West, although individual Third World countries have been neutral, or even friendly.

Such hostility is hardly surprising. The Third World, as a collectivity, exists to extract resources from the West. A hostile posture is apt for this purpose, since it can take advantage of national conflicts of interest among the Western nations, and the widespread feeling of guilt about Third World poverty. Hence the antagonism of many Third World delegates towards Western aid donors at the United Nations and on other platforms; hence the close ties to the Soviet bloc of many recipients of Western aid; hence the virulent attacks by Mrs Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, and Kwame Nkrumah at times when their countries were heavily dependent on Western donations. The practical effects of this hostility are aggravated by the tendency of the West to overrate the political im-

[8] There have been many other anomalies in the operation of Western aid, including large-scale aid to rich OPEC countries (even Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya), the granting of aid to both sides in a war, and sustained aid given by donors whose own fiscal and external deficits give ground for much anxiety. People are often baffled why such patent anomalies should persist in both the advocacy and the operation of aid. Answers to this type of question must be conjectural, and I have speculated on it in various of my writings, especially in my books *Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion* (1981) and *Reality and Rhetoric* (1984).

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portance of the Third World in general, and often of specific countries in that collectivity.

IN THE FIELD of international politics, the effects of politicisation of life extend beyond the countries directly involved. The rulers of closely-controlled economies are more likely to sympathise with the Soviet bloc than with the West, because state economic control is of the essence of the Soviet system. Civil conflicts provoked by the struggle for power, intensified by the receipt of aid, are useful to the Soviet bloc, which is far more adept at turning these to its own advantage than the ideologically much less self-confident West.

Unlike aid from Soviet-bloc countries, Western aid goes to governments openly hostile to other aid-recipient governments, or even at war with them. This anomaly enables anti-Western groups to claim that the West, and especially the USA, supports the enemies of their countries. This reaction has been conspicuous in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

From very small beginnings, multilateral transfers have become a major component of Western aid; they now exceed one-third of aid from the OECD countries, and greatly enhance the resources and standing of the international organisations involved, some of which are instruments and platforms for hostility to the West. This is undisguised in the UN and in FAO, UNESCO, and UNCTAD.

Examples, often bizarre, abound of this hostility and of the impotence of Western donors. For instance, on the centenary of Lenin's birth in April 1970, UNESCO—years before Mr M'Bow became its Director General—passed by an overwhelming majority a resolution calling on all member governments to pay tribute to him as a great humanitarian.

This hostility is likely to endure, because of the built-in majority of the Third World and the Soviet bloc in these organisations, and because of the political sentiments and loyalties of many staff members.

Influential aid-advocates and administrators are apt to regard the international aid organisations, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as forming the fiscal core of an embryonic World Government, a major objective of which would be global egalitarianism, large-scale international income-redistribution. Perhaps they are not aware that this policy would involve the use by the organisations of quasi-totalitarian powers over an indefinite period.

There has also grown up around foreign aid, and with its help, a substantial literature critical of the West and of the market system. Insistence, in much of this literature, that the prosperity of the West has been extracted from the Third World stirs up or reinforces Western feelings of guilt. This both promotes the extraction of more aid and often serves unacknowledged political and ideological purposes.

ANOTHER CONSEQUENCE of foreign aid, different from those already discussed, has been to generate a new branch of economics. World-wide preoccupation with foreign aid and the underdeveloped world has produced modern development economics. Before World War II, development economics did not exist as a distinct subject, or even as a term. There is an umbilical link between foreign aid and the hundreds of university departments, institutes, and centres of development economics which have proliferated throughout the world. Many of these organisations, including some of the largest, are supported by aid funds. This link may have shaped the subject beyond policy proposals. It may have contributed to the emphasis on aid, planning, and related topics at the expense of economic history, of the many phenomena and sequences in Third World countries which can be helpfully studied by economists, and of exploration of the interaction between political and cultural factors and the conventional variables of economics.

4. *Proposals & Prospects*

I HAVE ARGUED that foreign aid is more likely to inhibit than to promote development and relief of Third World poverty. It should be terminated. But if this is impractical, partly because of the momentum of existing commitments and because of the huge vested interests involved, improvements could be introduced to bring aid policy closer to its proclaimed objectives.

1. The most important single reform would involve a radical change in the criteria of allocation. Subsidies should be geared to the policies of the recipient governments, and not to the level of income of their peoples. Aid should go to those governments whose policies are most likely to promote the economic progress and general welfare of their peoples through humane leadership, effective administration, and the extension of personal freedoms. Such a reform would remove the most conspicuous anomalies of official aid, and enable it to make whatever contribution it can to improve the condition and prospects of the poorest.

The performance of recipients could be readily monitored by a handful of qualified people within Western foreign ministries. Such a change would greatly simplify the administration of aid, reduce the role of the national and international aid organisations, and remove the verbiage and mystique that surround aid policy.

This proposal is altogether different from the much-canvassed proposals to link debt relief and further aid to the pursuit of more market-oriented policies by recipient governments. Those proposals are likely to be ineffective in practice. Existing policies of close state control suit the political purposes of the recipient governments by extending their hold over their subjects. Governments abandon such policies only if their implementation leads to economic breakdown that would endanger their position. Otherwise they do no more than pay lip-service to the market, perhaps combined with cosmetic changes in the macro-economic area, but without substantial reorientation of micro-economic policies.

2. Aid should be bilateral, not multilateral. This would permit at least a vestige of control by the elected representatives

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Charity Sting?

IS THERE *a sting in the name of charity? Of the millions donated to British charities each year, a surprising percentage is spent in political propaganda. The Charities Commission, which has powers to stop what is going on, censured the Christian Aid charity in February 1986 for the content of some of its advertisements supporting economic sanctions against South Africa. No action was taken, however. The Commission rather feebly "accepted that the charity had misunderstood the extent to which charities can engage in political activities."*

The charity puts blatant political propaganda material into the "development education" category, on which it spent a staggering £1.8 million last year—more than an eighth of its total annual expenditure.

WHAT IS ODD **about the propaganda material pushed out by Christian Aid and other charities is that insofar as it has a political slant, the tilt is always to the Left.**

If the bias were accidental, it would surely incline to the Right some of the time. Yet little of the material gathered in from varous charities contains any criticism, however indirect, of the problems caused in poorer countries by the imposition of Communism or Socialism. The blame is nearly always directed at colonialism or capitalism.

WAR ON WANT *is one of the most explicit left-wing charitable organisations. The charity, realising that political activities are against the law, has set up a separate, non-charitable, political wing to raise money for propaganda. Yet the charity itself still plays politics. Its catalogue for 1987/88 advertises T-shirts bearing slogans ("Stop Profits from Poverty") which blame the British clearing-banks for the Third World's debts.*

The suggestion that the debts of poorer countries are the lenders' fault is actively peddled by Oxfam, which has circulated a cartoon of a fat capitalist saying:

> **"Did you know that the poor countries of the developing world give us $20 billion more every year than we give them? How come? Simple: we lend them cash at crippling interest rates to help them make us rich. We call it development!"**

OXFAM *is Britain's largest charity, with an income of £42 million in 1986/87. It spends £2.2 million of this on "education and campaigning", £5.8 million on fund-raising and £1.7 million on administration. Closer inspection of the itemised list of grants made by Oxfam for development aid reveals that a significant proportion of the 35% of aid spending which is listed as "social organisation" is in fact administrative expenditure, some of it apparently political. Little of this spending is likely to contribute much to the direct alleviation of poverty and disease in the developing countries.*

SPENDING **by charities on political material would be just as bad if the slant were to the Right. Charities receive donations from individuals and tax relief from the State for the sake of helping the needy, not for the sake of promoting any partisan point of view.**

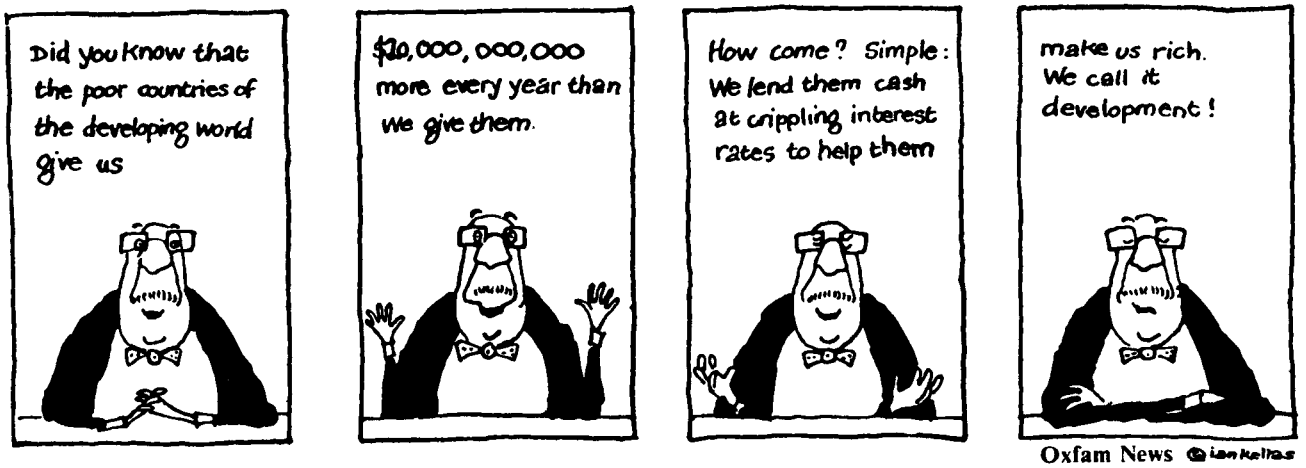
The Charities Commission make the position quite clear in a leaflet called "Political Activities by Charities". The leaflet says that it is wrong for charities inappropriately to seek to influence government policy, local or central, at home or abroad, or to advocate changes in the law or the retention of existing laws. It also says that political publicity in the guise of education is not charitable.

CHRIS PATTEN *is the Foreign Office Minister in charge of the Overseas Development Administration. At present, ODA gives around £30 million a year to charities, including £3.9 million to Oxfam, £1.6 million to Christian Aid, and £80,000 to War on Want. ODA should get tough and withhold these grants in future unless all political proselytisation ceases.*

Of course there are grey areas. It is not always possible to speak out for the poor without bringing in politics. But the systematic, obvious and one-sided propagandising in which too many of Britain's largest charities indulge must be stopped. The Charities Commission has powers to make trustees repay money that has been improperly spent. It should use them more vigorously.

THE ROOT **of the problem is deep and ancient. Most countries have much tighter definitions of what is a charity than Britain, and can therefore be more generous in giving tax relief for donations from individuals and companies. Britain, however, still relies on the loose definition set out in the preamble to an out-dated Act of Parliament passed in the reign of Elizabeth I.**

Christopher Monckton
in the EVENING STANDARD (*London*)


Did you know that the poor countries of the developing world give us
$20,000,000,000 more every year than we give them.
How come? Simple: We lend them cash at crippling interest rates to help them
make us rich. We call it development!
Oxfam News
Ian Kellas

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of the nation whose taxpayers are the real donors. Under multilateral aid, control by the donors is clearly impossible. For instance, at the height of the Falklands War, Britain, as a participant in the UN Development Programme, was obliged to give aid to Argentina. British protests were unavailing. In the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the largest of the UN specialised agencies, voting is on a one-state-one-vote basis, and objections by donors even to major decisions are ineffective.[9]

Supporters of multilateral transfers claim that this form of aid is disinterested and objective, and therefore more effective than bilateral aid. This is not so. With bilateral aid there is a somewhat closer contact between the supplier and the user of the transferred funds, and this tends to promote their more productive use. Bilateral aid is less likely to serve as an instrument of global egalitarianism—a policy which neither relieves poverty nor promotes development. It is naive to suppose that the bureaucracies and national delegates at international organisations do not have their own political, professional, and personal interests, and do not pursue them.

These two proposals for reform are unlikely to be implemented. Powerful vested interests support the existing aid policies, arrangements, and practices. These interests include: the national and international aid organisations and bureaucracies (notably the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and its offshoots, as well as its regional commissions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America); churches and other aid lobbies; and the commercial beneficiaries of aid transfers.

3. Aid should be untied—that is, separated from the purchase of exports from particular donors. Subsidies to Third World governments could then be distinguished from subsidies to exporters or bankers in the donor countries.

4. Subsidies should take the form of grants rather than of heavily subsidised loans which confuse donations with investment, and set up tensions between donors and recipients. When tied aid and subsidised loans are linked, as they often are, it is impossible to ascertain who gets how much, and from whom.

IN THIS CONTEXT of reform, what are the potentialities of voluntary charities?

The objections to official aid hardly apply to the work of voluntary charities, provided they are genuinely apolitical. (This qualification is necessary because some major Western charities seem to be concerned quite as much with political objectives as with relief of need.) The activities of voluntary organisations do not politicise life in recipient countries, and therefore are much less likely to contribute to tension and conflict. They also arouse less suspicion about the donors' motives.

Throughout most of the Third World, voluntary efforts are the only way to reach the poorest of the poor. Administered by people familiar with local conditions, these humane efforts can minimise the effect of permanent dependence on external help. Experienced personnel are necessary, since novices find it difficult to act effectively in unfamiliar cultural and social conditions. Small-scale operations are preferable to larger operations; they are likely to be more effective, and are less likely to be subjected to control by the recipient government.

WHAT LIES BEHIND economic achievement and progress? The answer, often shirked or ignored, may appear obvious, even trivial. It lies in the conduct of people, including that of governments—on personal, cultural, and social factors, and on political arrangements. Access to external markets can be a significant factor; but in practice many benefits derived from this nearly always depend on these primary factors.

Economic achievement and advance do not depend on financial or natural resources. I have noted the relative unimportance of the volume of investible funds. I must add that abundant natural resources—including land—do not generate sustained prosperity, although mineral resources yield occasional windfalls. This point is underlined by the wide income differences, within one country, between the persons and communities who have access to the same natural resources.

The contemporary Third World is not short of natural resources. Most of Africa and Latin America and much of Asia is sparsely populated. Many millions of extremely poor people have abundant cultivable land—witness among others the tribes-folk of Black Africa and the Amazonian Indians, who live in areas where land is a free good. Conversely, many of the most prosperous areas of the Third World (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and parts of Malaysia) are very densely populated, even where the land is not inherently fertile.

Such phenomena are not new. Amidst abundant, indeed unlimited, land and vast natural resources, the American Indians were wretchedly poor at the time when the first European colonies were established and when much of Europe with far less land was already rich.

Poverty and riches depend on man, his culture, his motivations, and his political arrangements. Herein lies the wealth and the poverty of nations.

[9] This situation represents an abrupt reversal of what was until not long ago firmly-established constitutional practice in Britain. Until well after World War II, even modest grants from Britain to colonial governments had to be confined to those for whose conduct a minister was answerable in Parliament to the elected representatives of the British taxpayer. This principle has been abandoned under official aid, since the conduct of the recipient government is very rarely questioned.

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THEATRE

Grave Ends

By Edward Pearce

THE IDEAS of the Liverpool playwright Willy Russell are calculated to win the scorn of Marxists and Right-wing fogies alike. In *Educating Rita* he showed working-class life as a boring ritual of pints and procreation. The escape from it for a bright girl comes from a yearning for books. The wife of a dull, unknowing lump finds Keats and Blake and her release. Such an approach would be regarded on the hortatory Left as unsound, escapist, and sentimental, while the fogies would probably say, "How sweet of her", and snigger.

Russell's outlook *is* sentimental in that it craves happiness for the protagonists, but in fact he looks at the same problem which initially preoccupied Raymond Williams, who died at the end of January. Working-class culture has come to nothing. It is at the lethargic, passive end of distribution, a devitalised body fed intravenously. What is the way out? Williams, not unreasonably, saw high culture as the route leading to other classes, the loss of social fidelity, and "making it". For High Church antiquarians and Marxists alike, "making it" is an abomination, intrusion or betrayal, according to prejudice.

Willy Russell, first in *Rita* and now in *Shirley Valentine* at the Vaudeville Theatre, speaks plainly for the gifted working-class individualist. (On stage alone for two hours, Pauline Collins holds the audience rapt, giving probably her finest performance to date.) Shirley Bradshaw prepares egg-and-chips every night of the week for the tea of her husband, excepting only Thursdays when she prepares mince-and-chips. However, the routine has been fractured by a Vegan bloodhound to whom in a moment of scatty inspiration—on the principle that a bloodhound should taste meat at least once in its life—Shirley has fed half a pound of mince! Joe does the correct thing expected of his sex and class status, saying "What's this, woman?" before sweeping the affront to the social decencies clean off the table and going out for a Chinese takeaway. Up till now Shirley has spent her time quietly, in rational conversation with the wall. ("I like a glass of wine when I'm making his tea, don't I, wall?" is a line for the anthologies.) The protocols of the *Almanach de Gotha* shattered, her release becomes possible.

Shirley trawls her life so far. She talks hilariously about sex—dismal with thudding Joe. She rather likes the idea of "Clitoris" as a girl's name. "Why not? There's enough fellers around called Dick."

This is Shirley's way—bright and sardonic, not truly beaten down yet, despite the hermetic and oppressive ways of working-class life. But first-class music-hall wit is matched with melancholy introspection. Here and now she is Mrs Bradshaw, a no-account, immured mum, children grown up, life completed, as she contemplates her stretch marks and considers that at 42 she has hardly inhaled life at all. The prospects are of Merseyside in perpetuity, acceptance, duty, and talking to the wall. Before she was married, she had another name—the Shirley Valentine of the title—and everything had seemed possible. She remembers a question from a teacher at school—"What is the most important invention of all?" Shirley had known the answer, the wheel; her teacher had first ignored her ("No, Shirley, of course you couldn't know"), but after running through the class without success, condescendingly let her answer. She had been not pleased but appalled that Shirley should know.

The episode symbolises the entire Willy Russell outlook. It is broadly unpolitical; it involves kinship with the working class, and a deadly grasp of its limitations, together with a certainty that enlightenment and liberation are possible. In this he goes against current educational practice, which suffers hideously from many teachers' resentments and inadequacies, overlaid by the illiterating cant of much educational theory. Russell thinks that the best is good enough for anyone with a spark of talent, and rejoices when they find it.

THE BEST FOR Shirley is to take the chance, offered by a slightly condescending friend, of a holiday in Greece. There is no point in talking about it to Joe ("He gets culture shock if we go to Chester"). We are left dangling at the interval; but when the curtain rises on a rock in Corfu, the audience burst into spontaneous applause. There is, of course, more gentle derison of the British abroad, fearful of foreign muck on their plates, crassly and uncomprehendingly rude to the locals (to a Greek waiter: "Hey you—Zorba. Come 'ere"). There are also Douggie and Jeanette from Manchester: "Nice people but, you know, if they were at the Last Supper they'd want chips." Shirley has kicked up her heels. When the time comes for luggage to go through the checks at the airport, she doubles back, passing the waiter with whom she has had a cool-headed, humorous fling. As he repeats his seduction formula to another tripper, Shirley tells him: "Carry on. It's not you I can't do without, but can I have a job at the taverna?" The possibility is wryly entertained that she may find herself cooking egg-and-chips for relays of Douggies and Jeanettes, but instead of talking to a wall in Kirby she will be talking to the Aegean. She is happy; she has rearranged the world on her own terms; and Joe, corresponding like an outraged reader of the *Daily Telegraph*, can accept or not.

Russell is an optimist preoccupied with a centrally important cultural problem. The failure of education to affect

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British working-class people and to alter what Ernest Bevin called "the terrible poverty of their expectations" is a permanent reproach to this country. We have universal education and a school-leaving age of 16, and we have joined the European Community, but it hardly shows. Narrowness, littlemindedness; the inability to be made interested, to light up with pleasure at the new and the beautiful, are all too evident. They are witnessed in the British habit—it might be termed "egg and chips with everywhere"—of taking "home" with them when they go abroad.

Yet Russell also runs the perpetual risk of being patronised by that audience for whom Skiathos and John Donne are a birthright. A clever, witty, unprivileged Liverpudlian, he still sees good things with pleasure and without a little shrug. The possibility exists that commentators who have had life easier will weary of his unsmart state of pleased surprise and smile him down. That would be one more affront. Russell, charting the liberalising enlightenment of books and places, while staying in touch with the upper end of popular entertainment (some of his lines remind me of the comedian Victoria Wood), is using a popular medium for a grave end. It is his genius to straddle two cultures and talk brilliant sense to both.

STRADDLING OF A different sort is the flair of Hugh Whitemore, whose *Best of Friends* at the Apollo gives easy, comfortable pleasure, and makes a fine vehicle for Sir John Gielgud at 83. It deals with the friendship between Sir Sydney Cockerell (Gielgud), curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Dame Laurentia MacLaughlin, Abbess of Stanbrook (Rosemary Harris), and George Bernard Shaw (Ray McAnally). The tolerance and kindness of Shaw to duller people than himself is a luminous truth, made evident with the publication of other series of letters[1] than the *correspondence à trois* from which Mr Whitemore has tailored this piece. His kind-hearted endurance of Alfred Douglas, whom most of his acqaintance rightly looked upon as a mouthful of paraquat, carried charity beyond reasonable expectation.

Here Shaw was dealing only with a prosy old woman of an academic, and an immured nun. One should always declare prejudices—and mine find the celebration of 68 years' enclosure of a good mind in the gerbil run of monastic routine something a little below atrocity. However, just as there is heavy Church attendance in the richer suburbs (a topic worth somebody's attention—but, please, not mine), so there is a market in the West End for plays with a religious haze about them. We are invited to admire Dame Laurentia's serenity. It seems to be admirable only in the restricted way of Listerian sterility, as pure but less useful than a boiled spatula, and, like everything religious, nostalgic and only capable of life if the rules are suspended.

The piece will give pleasure. It is professional, gentle, well adapted to the elderly personae. Also it boasts a wonderful performance from Rosemary Harris, who gives us Morningside and monasticism between the eyes. Sir John has a part to his own taste in old age, an elder bumbler but one with a store of dignity and old-fashioned scholarly ways. Cockerell, by the sound of it, was a pretty fair extra-mural monk himself, coming late to marriage, and early reconciling himself to an invalid wife. The vitality of Shaw, for whom this acquaintance was a tiny part of, is all the more marked. His laconic exit line—"I am going to die now"—is a crisp end to 90-odd years of vigour. The play seems by contrast almost to be a celebration of an elderly, pottering valetudinarianism. It suffices; but it does not exhilarate.

NO ONE WOULD speak thus of Shaw's own *Candida* (Arts Theatre), though it has had some utterly undeserved bad reviews. The combination of Clare Lyth's loving and thoughtful set, a quite outstanding piece of design, which takes real trouble to reassemble a young clergyman's study 90 years ago, and Frank Hauser's unintrusive production gives us Shaw plain and to the point.

As always with Shaw, Woman is elevated and overrated; he saw angels everywhere, hence perhaps his tolerance of that wretched nun. Distinctly cool in his own sexuality, he esteems women for a superiority which has its roots in sex and its expression in a sort of gentle patronage of the idiotic pursuing male. Without Shaw's wit and benevolence, this stance could grow very tiresome, but neither are ever far off. The portrait of Morrell, rising Left-wing clergyman with a full engagement-book, a grasp of his own destiny, and a deficiency of self-doubt, is admirably done by David Rintoul. The incredible character of Marchbanks, a sort of blameless Swinburne with perfect intuition and no knowledge of how to tie his shoes, is perfectly cast in the person of Grant Thatcher (happily no relation), wild-haired, and innocent-dangerous. But Marchbanks's declaration of love for Candida merely illustrates Shaw's theatrical flair and mother reverence.

At the crunch Morrell offers his strength, resolution, and support while Marchbanks pleads his total inadequacy, weakness, and need for Candida. She, with a grasp of the home key apt for a creation of the music critic "Corno di Bassetto", acknowledges the declarations as proof of Morrell's dependency and Marchbanks's toughness, and stays coolly with the status quo. It is a clever but facile ending, just as Shaw's feminism is an odd tailoring of women's aspirations to his own quirks. But the piece retains those qualities of intelligent debate and ping-pong paradox which outlive the earnest underpinning cause.

Shaw's dialogue is more interesting than any of his opinions, just as his written correspondence survives his often wearing friends. The flaw in the thinking comes from the incredible elevation of Candida. She is the daughter of the rough end of the building trade. Her father, Burgess, is a bouncy, culture-free cockney. She is not, in fact, so very far from the world of Shirley Valentine, yet the fulfilment, the content, the total mastery of life with which Shaw invests her are kin to the "serenity" of Dame Laurentia. But then Shaw was a bit of a monk himself.

[1] *Dear Mr Shaw: Selections from Bernard Shaw's Postbag*. Compiled and edited by VIVIAN ELLIOTT. Introduction by MICHAEL HOLROYD. Bloomsbury, £14.95.

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LETTERS

The Bloemfontein Experience

DAN JACOBSON in his article "In a Lost Language" (July-August 1987) called Bloemfontein "the tinpot capital of the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State". The overtones of this remark are the sort of reflex side-swipe we in this beleaguered country are getting hardened to, but my own experience in Bloemfontein was in such marked contrast I feel constrained to record it.

I have lived 40 years as an Englishman in South Africa, a sort of internal exile for most of them, as Mr Jacobson (from your note on him) appears to be an external one. Twenty years ago, travelling between Johannesburg and Cape Town, I stopped overnight in the capital of the Orange Free State, and took the opportunity in the morning of visiting the Raadsaal, where the old Boer Republic made its laws. Its quiet dignity affected me strongly—indeed, the only other time I recall such an overwhelming surprise was in the Pantheon at Rome, and that awed even the barbarians. I had met brilliant liberal Afrikaners and strident nationalists, and had been unable to reconcile them in my mind. In my Bloemfontein experience I perceived at last the third dimension of this gravely European people, whom my gentle old friend T. J. Haarhoff, Professor of Classics at the University of the Witwatersrand, had tried to persuade me as having a Roman destiny in South Africa. In a lecture published in 1948 he wrote:

> "Then comes Alexander to break down the narrow bounds of the city-state and to preach openly the doctrine of the unity of mankind. But he is in too much of a hurry: he provokes a reaction. And it is left for Rome . . . by slow steps and in the light of the Stoic philosophy, to bring Alexander's dream . . . into the realms of reality . . . broadly speaking by observing the principles of growth and not missing out intermediate steps. . . ."

In the same year—a year of destiny of another sort for South Africa—a friend of Haarhoff's, a fellow-Afrikaner, Jan Christiaan Smuts, saw published the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (so often used nowadays by ignoramuses to belabour us), which he had personally drafted for the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Such are a proportion of the people now struggling to develop South Africa in terms of "security, social . . . constitutional . . . and economic reform" (I quote the Deputy Minister of Information and Constitutional Development).

Although an Englishman, I am not ashamed to learn from the Dutch, who have taught us things about liberty over the years. "Harmony in South Africa is not impossible", wrote Haarhoff. "But it is a long and arduous task. *Tantae molis*, says Vergil, so great a toil it was to build the Roman nation."

Much has changed in the 40 years since his lecture was published; but I trust it will be the Western way that evolves here, and prevails over the stealth of Russia and the childish impetuosity of America.

PHILIP BIRKINSHAW

Grahamstown
South Africa

I HAVE visited Bloemfontein many more times than Mr Birkinshaw apparently has; alas, the impression the town made on me was always rather a dreary one. The Macedonian and Roman parallels he seeks to draw leave me mystified.

DAN JACOBSON

University College
London

Gorbachov Reforms N.Y.?

TO THE VARIOUS factors which are currently feeding the "Western fantasies" about Gorbachov's Russia which Melvin J. Lasky has analysed in ENCOUNTER (February) I suggest that one should add another. It is not as weighty as the basic elements of history and ideology; but it should not be overlooked since it derives from that unfortunate and misbegotten modishness with which our superficial Western press and media plague the public discourse. It mixes political coyness and journalistic cuteness—a fashion unknown in the world of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*: but if it helps the boss it must be progressive and peace-loving.

For example, the *New York Times* the other day (6 February 1988) published an article by Andrew Stein, who is the President of the New York City Council. He was wrestling, not unlike public officials in London or Paris or elsewhere in the democratic world, with the problems of the schools and education in an urban big-city environment. This is the way he put it (in yet another contribution to the theory and practice of USA-USSR "moral equivalence"):

> "The more I learn about the New York City Board of Education . . . the more I appreciate what Mikhail S. Gorbachov is up against. The hero of *perestroika*—restructuring—would surely find something familiar in an arrangement that rewards sloth and irresponsibility and discourages initiative."

Thus coyly begun, he concludes his argument against various proposed changes with the cute cry:

> "What we need (with apologies to Mr Gorbachov) is restructuring. . . ."

No apologies needed! Comrade Gorbachov would, one suspects, be only too happy to lend-lease a few rehabilitated Bolshevik Party officials to supervise the reform of the N.Y.C. school system and even throw in a handful of *KGB* agents to supervise the supervisors. If President Stein wants *perestroika* he ought to import "the right stuff". Satisfaction guaranteed.

JAMES T. WILLARD

Washington, D.C.

Cycles of Soviet Illusionism

MELVIN J. LASKY'S superb survey of Western fantasies about the Soviet Union is enough to make one despair of public sanity. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the blind projection of Western ideals on to a Stalin and comment on the *Perestroika* in 1988, which hardly amounts to "a recurrence of the fevers of political neurosis". For the new comment is in the main not Sovietophilia, because most of us strongly wish, perhaps unrealistically, for changes in the Soviet Union that would transform its essence.

"*Perestroika*" is a term new to Soviet ideology, because before no Communist state had ever confessed to bankruptcy. In his Khabarovsk speech (31 July 1986) Mr Gorbachov did just this. He publicly admitted that the hitherto champion *troika* of Ideology, Armament, and Centralism had won its last race. His book (*Perestroika*, 1987) written for foreign publishers did not quite maintain the Khabarovsk frankness. Evidently the Party had by then found it necessary to mask the local disaster a bit by offering *perestroika* to the whole world, as if every country was as broke as the Soviet Union. Thus, we get no concrete analysis of Soviet problems but what must be the longest stretch of double-talk in political literature. Throughout the tone is of moral re-armament:

> "Everyone must assume responsibility: in the Politburo, in local bodies and in grass-roots organisations. We must be better than we are. We shall help those who can't improve themselves. The main thing is to be conscientious. . . . I don't mean to say that people should be coaxed, like

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candidates do in some countries during election campaigns. Our people don't like it. They must know the truth. One mustn't be afraid of one's own people. . . ."

In Moscow I recently heard the unkind comment that such passages "are like the exhortations of an over-enthusiastic football coach". To "*perestroika*" some cynics prefer the term "*peredyshka*", which means the "breather" before strangulation. Others have settled for "*katastroika*".

Moscow gave me no premonition of collapse. As in 1947 and in 1956 the people was its congenital robust self. The only novelty seemed to be a slight imperial mood. Nowadays, I learned, Muscovites are sometimes brusque with foreigners, like Londoners in the '20s and '30s. But, after all, these are citizens of the only European superpower, a country which makes submarines 250 yards long; and (as in the current joke) boasts of "the largest micro-chip in the world"!

The Soviet system, which inherited a massive chunk of the deadly Czarist bureaucracy, psychologically suits a population that doesn't want to be free. There is no gainsaying this lack of interest in freedom: the population does not follow the dissidents. Sovietism, as Alexander Zinoviev has shown, is a system for managing people, not things. To improve the economy, Mikhail Gorbachov or somebody else has somehow to persuade "slaves" to become free agents; and many "masters" to retire altogether. For this task a Napoleon, a real First Consul, would seem to be needed.

After 30 years I sensed again the specific dignity which belongs to a people of survivors: a nation which has endured just about everything from the siege of Leningrad to *Pravda* and the local Party boss. Here, of course, courage joins forces with irony and black humour. This can be sophisticated. A man I met gave me a marvellous rendering of a girl being quizzed by a TV-journalist on the street about the Washington Agreement and saying: "Well, it was about time Reagan pulled himself together and signed up!"

Westerners, I came to feel, forget too easily that Russia, temporarily in Soviet garb, is one of the only four large historic nations left in Europe. Inhabitants of very old nations, especially when they have elevated endurance into an heroic principle, are apt to regard themselves as eternal. It is true that the Soviet Union is a frustrated shopping society, with appalling poverty in rural regions. But I don't believe that consumer-demand is fierce enough to stimulate people to riot as yet; or that Western cultural stimulation is strong enough to overcome dislike of some negative features of American life. In purchasing the soap-opera *Dallas* for nation-wide TV-showing, the Soviet authorities are probably counting shrewdly on the repugnance it will provoke.

Heaven knows what the *Perestroika*, will bring forth. In the years to come, bus-loads of learned analysts will be trying to make intelligible models of the changing economy out of contradictory statements and fudged figures. One wishes them luck. One is about as likely to discover the truth in these areas as voodoo in Whitehall. Only those foreign observers with the most sensitive antennae and a marked gift for three-dimensional chess will be able to distinguish plans from performance or words from deeds. Even if our very best professors are taken to Soviet bosoms, they will risk engulfment by conceptual fog and creative accountancy.

I suggest, finally, that the West should not be deadly serious in all this. The late Tibor Szamuely, who went to Soviet schools and Stalin's camps, used to recommend that we should try to enjoy the Soviet Union, especially its power to produce the fantastic. So let the next "Cycle of Western Fantasies" be harmonised, in sympathetic symbiosis, with the forthcoming "Cycle of Soviet Illusionism". On this basis one can imagine quite a pleasant working-relationship between observer and observed.

CHARLES JANSON

London

Visiting Mussolini

THOMAS SOWELL'S ARTICLE on "Visions of War and Peace" (December 1987) seems to me to sum up very well the conflict of views which preceded the outbreak of World War II. But, for the sake of strict accuracy, it should be pointed out that the visit of Chamberlain and Lord Halifax to Mussolini took place on 10 January 1939, not "in 1938".

E. W. F. TOMLIN

London

Watson's Contradiction

GEORGE WATSON ("The Conservative Contradiction", November 1987) does well to bring out that, in the days of Gladstone and Disraeli, Liberals supported while Conservatives opposed, the economic principles of Adam Smith. But Watson is wantonly wrong in his abuse of "Reaginism-Thatcherism"; which, he says,

> ". . . imagines itself the inheritor of the tradition of Smith and even of Gladstone, and . . . does not know—or wish to be told—that both Adam Smith and William Gladstone believed the wealth of the nation should be used not only to profit the rich but to succour the poor."

This charge is the very contrary of the truth. Two references must here suffice for refutation. First, back in 1962, in *Capitalism and Freedom*—one of the classics of "The New Right Enlightenment"—Milton Friedman was arguing for economic growth and a negative income tax as the most direct and effective cures for poverty. In Britain the Selsdon Group—sometimes described as "so dry as to be positively crisp"—has always insisted that the maintenance of a minimum standard of living for all is an essential part of the proper business of the state. Thus in *A Beginner's Guide to Public Expenditure Cuts* (Brief No. 18, 1980, p.7) we can read:

> "Only by cutting out some state activities altogether can this or any other government concentrate on that very limited list—defence . . . guaranteeing a minimum standard of life to the poorest—of activities which . . . only the state can perform. The last mentioned is, of course, not the least important duty of the state."

ANTONY FLEW

Reading

Watson's Reply

IN MODERN elective states, all parties claim to be against poverty, and when I accused modern conservatives of failing to help the poor, I meant just that—not that they admitted to failing them. The TUC report of December 1987, much of it based on government figures, shows how far the gap between rich and poor has widened during Margaret Thatcher's premiership; and the fate of inner cities under President Reagan's leadership is a notorious fact in the United States. As Professor Flew must know, it is among the most uncontroversial of objections to the policies of the New Right, if not the most powerful, to guess that Adam Smith or Gladstone would not have approved of them.

Welfare, as Mr Sinn (Letters, February) rightly implies, need not entail a welfare state. William Beveridge was as clear about that as any of his Liberal predecessors. It is even a question whether state welfare would have succeeded before 1900. F. B. Smith, for example, in *The People's Health 1830-1910* (1979), has shown that (before the discovery of modern drugs) medical treatment could as easily shorten life as lengthen it—so that a National Health Service cannot be called one of the missed opportunities of Victorian Liberals or 18th-century Whigs.

My wider point, regrettably, is still neglected. If, as I have proposed in *The*

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Idea of Liberalism (1985), socialism in practice favours a rich and privileged class and competition favours the poor, then there can be no clear case for calling socialism Left-wing. That seems to be well understood by Gorbachov's conservative opponents in the Soviet Union, who are now busy shoring up socialism to protect their own privileges against the winds of competition. I suspect modern conservatives to be guilty of semi-socialism here. They accept the Left-wing claims of socialism, that is, for no reason except that socialists make them. But socialists have been wrong about a lot of things in the past century-and-a-half, and they may also be wrong in their view that capitalism is socially conservative. Meanwhile my challenge stands. If there is anything conservative about competitive capitalism, let some conservative now tell us what it is.

GEORGE WATSON

St John's College
Cambridge

Craft *durch* Hobbies

A FOOTNOTE to your "Life & Letters" quotation (ENCOUNTER, January 1988) about Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* which was classified as "Travel" and a holiday resort. When, some years ago, I asked at Foyle's—and the bookshop assistant was German—for my father H. W. Belmore's *Rilke's Craftsmanship*, I was directed to the "Hobbies Department"!

MANFORD BELMORE

Erlangen
West Germany

"Rambo", Pro & Contra

JEFFREY RICHARDS's original article ("Yobbery with Violence", ENCOUNTER, February 1987) was more sensible than his rather self-righteous put-down of poor Don Sharp (Letters, November). Unlike Don Sharp, I *have* extensive experience of living in Britain—I have even worked as a film reviewer here—and can speak with a little more authority about the role model supposedly furnished by *Rambo*.

The fashionable sneering at this cartoon-like character by Jeffrey Richards and others has always bemused me. So has their sanctimonious attitude toward the films. Leaving aside for a monent the gauche writing and acting of *Rambo*, what is the character, really? He is a fundamentally straightforward and decent man, driven to defensive violence by betrayal and persecution from people he should have been able to trust—or by the imperatives of a mission in a good cause, also betrayed by scheming politicians. This is not an endorsement of "murderous, macho violence". Nor is it "mindless", as some have claimed.

It is amusing to note that critics who are such Holy-Willie puritans about *Rambo* (always confusing style with substance) have fallen over themselves to praise the simple-minded and depressingly banal content of films like *Platoon, Full Metal Jacket, et al.* (War is just awfully awfully bad, and we must all try to be good in spite of it. . . .)

It is not plain violence that makes *Rambo* emotionally attractive to a wide audience. It is the fact that his violence appears *justified*, and therefore satisfying. Because the justification is crudely presented, critics ignore it in favour of muscular posters, Sylvester Stallone's oiled, bare chest, and the M-60 machine-gun he is holding. Mr Richards has fallen flat into this iconic habit of non-thinking, which seems to me rather mindless, and certainly as simplistic as the cartoonish manner of the *Rambo* films.

As for *Rambo* as a role model in Britain, the image of a man who will combat betrayal and deadly force with violence is not, I think, what lies behind the Hooligan mentality sniffed at by Mr Richards. I doubt any real connection at all. The holligans and the tube-train thugs existed in this country long before *Rambo*; I encountered them in parks, tube trains, and elsewhere during the "Teddy-boy" period; and history records them before that. If I may indulge in a little guessing myself, I suspect that the anti-American animus which Mr Richards says he deplores shows a little in the extravagant language he applies ("tirades", etc.) to a critique whose point—confusion of image with reality—is quite valid.

HERB GREER

Manchester

Homer & Homeric Efforts

PETER JONES ("Winged Words", ENCOUNTER, January) writes as entertainingly, as is his wont, about the problems of translating Homer into modern English; but on some of the main issues of principle he is mistaken.

He is, for a start, unduly pessimistic. "No one", he writes, "reads epic these days." In fact a lot of people still read *Paradise Lost*, and not only to pass public examinations. And if classical texts are diluted too much in translation—if, for example, Homer is made to sound like a second-rate 20th-century traditional novelist—there isn't really much point in reading them anyway; there are plenty of great books around in our own language. One advantage of reading works from partly alien cultures is to extend the range of our literary experience, to escape our own parochialism, to see with other eyes.

Peter Jones's own version of Menelaus's angry speech from *Iliad* 7 makes the point for me. Menelaus is made to say things like "Loud-mouths! Women! . . . Very well. You can all crawl back to the mud you came from, every spineless man-jack of you—just sitting there": other versions are criticised because "we do not insult each other like this". But in the past high poetry involved a degree of stylisation. Greeks, too, never insulted each other in the language of Homer. And does anyone in "real" life ever say "every spineless man-jack of you"? These words are just as artificial as Homer's, but have the disadvantage of plumbing greater depths of banality.

Dr Jones's hostility to anything that smacks of archaism is characteristic of our age, but is not really consistent with a taste for older poetry at all, whether Greek, Latin or our own (and even moderns like Yeats know perfectly well how to use it).

As for my "unsuccessful" attempt to defend metaphrase to which he refers—a 17th-century, not 18th-century mode of translation, incidentally—I do not rest my case on theory alone. The two best translations of Horace's *Odes* known to me—Milton's *Pyrrha* and Ben Jonson's version of 4.1—are not only distinguished poems, but, as examples of metaphrase, also tell us something in detail about the original.

The thing can be done; let some at least of our translators go and do likewise. There is no point in reading Homer, Horace, and the rest merely to see reflections of our own faces.

CHARLES MARTINDALE

Classical and Medieval Studies
University of Sussex

THE PROBLEM with Charles Martindale's excellent article (to which I referred) is that he argues that 17th-century translators are the answer for non-Latinists who want to tackle Horace. His letter reinforces the impression that the difference between us is one of the accessibility of the translation to as wide an audience as possible.

Milton's translation of Horace is, naturally, more accessible than the Latin, and is ideal for a certain class of reader. But is it a translation for "Everyman", or at least the Penguin public? I yearn to have everyone reading Homer, and do not agree that such a translation need necessarily turn Homer into a second-rate pot-boiler.

PETER JONES

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Life & Letters Today

Somerset

RUDE WORD: *The leading new candidate for the leadership of the Liberal Party is 46-year-old Paddy Ashdown, M.P. for Yeovil, a former Royal Marine, with a record of active service in the Far East. He graduated from the University of Hong Kong as a Chinese interpreter (Mandarin, First Class), and won a medal in the Sarawak Campaign to quell a rebellion in Brunei.*

"It was in Singapore that I discovered I was really bloody good at languages. . . . They're pretty simple Tarzan languages. If you want the plural of something you just say it twice: one egg, egg-egg, and so on. . . . I taught myself Malay, a language I wanted to learn the moment I found that it had one word for 'Let's-take-off-our-clothes-and-tell-rude-stories'. . . ."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

San Francisco

TRANSPOSED HEADS: **Colonel Oliver North's fame was fleeting in the world of dolls. So John Lee Hudson and his wife, Shana, San Francisco business consultants, plan to take the heads off their unsold North dolls and replace them with Mikhail S. Gorbachov heads. The Colonel's Marine uniform will be replaced by a Gorbachovian Italian suit, covering a bit of added stuffing. Price: $19.95.**

NEW YORK TIMES

London

POETIC INJUSTICE: *Ascetic, polemical A.N. Wilson's latest rallying cry, taken up by London's right-thinking literati, for a memorial to Matthew Arnold in Westminster Abbey's Poets Corner, suggests (to borrow a phrase) that Wilson's brains have finally gone to his head.*

Wilson decided it was a shameful fact that Westminster Abbey had wilfully ignored Matthew Arnold for 99 years. So outraged was he that he fired off letters to the relevant authorities and set up a petition headed by, among others, Victoria Glendinning and "Literary Review" editor Auberon Waugh.

Waugh loyally penned a crusading piece in his latest issue. "Unlike many of those whose monuments adorn the Abbey, Arnold's reputation has stood the test of time, and his continued exclusion seems shameful", Waugh roars, urging readers to write to the Rt Reverend Dean of Westminster. The Dean has received a barrage of letters calling for the immediate erection of a Matthew Arnold memorial in Poets Corner.

Curiously, a bust of Arnold has stood in Poets Corner since 1891, venerated by millions of visitors—but evidently not A. N. Wilson.

"The memorial to Arnold has been there an awfully long time but perhaps it isn't very prominent", says the Dean's office. Wilson was not at home to explain his appalling gaffe but Auberon Waugh admits his chagrin.

"Oops", he said this morning.

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

Washington D.C.

BEST-SELLER: **The defeat of Judge Robert Bork, the President's nominee for the Supreme Court, in the Senate Judiciary Committee, came as a devastating blow to the White House.**

Howell Heflin, the fat and amiable Senator from Alabama, could by no stretch of the conservative imagination be described as the member of what President Reagan called "a liberal lynch mob".

Heflin felt Bork lacked warmth and humanity. He made a strenuous effort to find the "real Bork".

In the most bizarre exchange of the hearings he asked the Judge if he had once written detective stories with a hero called "Dick Dork", private investigator. An embarrassed Bork said he had once thought of doing so.

"Why", said Heflin, "I think Dick Dork by Bob Bork would be a best-seller."

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Horsham

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING: *Too many West Sussex youngsters are choosing chips and doughnuts for school dinners, it was claimed at a meeting of the County Education committee—and the comment sparked off a full-scale dispute over children's eating habits. Some councillors attacked the "chips with everything" attitude. "Many of our adolescents are learning the habit of eating quick, cheap food. . . . Dietary education is important."*

Another felt the West Sussex school meals service was an excellent one and a last bulwark of good eating standards available to children. There were superb menus. Fast foods and synthetic foods were more a matter for parental education.

One councillor said if it came to education for healthy living, West Sussex was doing its bit. "But we cannot compel parents to adopt our philosophy", he added. "I have never been served chips with my doughnuts in schools."

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY TIMES

London

UNDIPLOMATIC: **Our discussion about the change in meaning of the word "gay" reminds me [Godfrey Smith writes]. I seem to recall that the eminent Irish diplomat Sir Con O'Neill had to put up with the French imploring him to change his first name, which seems to mean something rather rude over there. Sir Con resolutely refused to be such a con.**

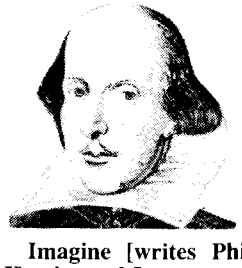
SUNDAY TIMES

Berne

TELLING TALES: *Fritz Mathys Weist, a Swiss historian, has said that folk hero William Tell could not have used a crossbow to shoot an apple off his son's head because crossbows were virtually unknown here in the 13th century.*

THE TIMES

London



CLIFF-HANGING: **If you love them—all the Carringtons and the Colbys in *Dynasty*—who am I to spoil them for you? All I would lament is your willingness to accept once again the loony cliff-hangers that are set up between runs of the series, and the calculation and cynicism they represent on the part of the producers.**

Imagine [writes Philip Purser] Shakespeare had got Hamlet and Laertes at each other's throats, Gertrude and Claudius reaching for the poisoned wine, and young Fortinbras about to storm the castle—and at this point he rang down the curtain and said, "Sorry, folks, you'll have to wait until next season". He would very properly have been lynched.

DAILY MAIL

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SOCIETIES OBSERVED

Deviance and Moral Boundaries

Witchcraft, the Occult, Science Fiction, Deviant Sciences and Scientists

NACHMAN BEN-YEHUDA

Ben-Yehuda charts the growth and survival of several forms of rarely studied deviances to support his theory that deviance and reactions to it are ways of establishing moral boundaries in changing communities. "[The book] rescues the sociology of deviance from the charge of triviality–and does so admirably."–Erich Goode, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Laughing Matters

Comic Tradition in India

LEE SIEGEL

This journey through the unexplored realm of Indian comedy presents Siegel's own entertaining translations of Sanskrit literature together with his perceptions of modern Indian humor reflected in cartoons, movies, books, and social life. Both serious and hilarious, the book develops a theory of the aesthetics of comedy and the psychology of laughter. Illus.

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Andrea Wisnewski and

Regulating Society

Beguines, Bohemians, and Other Marginals

EPHRAIM H. MIZRUCHI

Mizruchi examines five formal and informal structures–from monasteries to the WPA–that emerged throughout history to accommodate various social nonconformists. He shows how each provided a holding process he calls "abeyance" that defused potentially violent or disruptive behavior. "...a little gem of sociological analysis." –Lewis Coser, *Contemporary Sociology*

Culture and Human Nature

Theoretical Papers of

MELFORD E. SPIRO

Edited by Benjamin Kilborne and L. L. Langness

One of the few anthropologists trained in psychoanalysis, Spiro has provided a distinctive theoretical approach that is evidenced in this collection of his major writings on culture and human nature, functional analysis, and religion.

The Sacred Remains

Myth, History, and Polity in Belau

RICHARD J. PARMENTIER

Foreword by Michael Silverstein

Belau is an Austronesian culture of western Micronesia. Its history, Parmentier contends, cannot be understood without taking into account indigenous categories of space, time, and transformation and the social actions that transmit historical knowledge. His semiotic approach typifies the recent ethnographic challenges to Western views of the history of non-Western societies. Illus.

To Dance Is Human

A Theory of Nonverbal Communication

JUDITH LYNNE HANNA

Hanna's theory of dance as an essential and universal human activity encompasses disciplines as diverse as anthropology, semiotics, political science, and religion. "Hanna's splendid book is the best exposition of the science, art, and philosophy of dance that I have read." – Ashley Montagu, *The Sciences* Illus.

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